

Voices of the Forest

Tribal Folktales from Southern Orissa

Documented and Edited by

**Ashok Kumar Mishra and
Girish Chandra Dash**

Translated by Anand Mahanand

PURVA PRAKASH

Voices of the Forest: Tribal Folktales from Southern Orissa

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Translated into English by Anand Mahanand

Voices of the Forest is an English Translation of
Aranyara Swara: Dakshina Odissara Adivasi Lokakatha,
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Bhasha

Foreword

Among the Indian states in India, Odisha is probably the state with the largest range of linguistic and cultural diversity. For one it shows an excellent example of the commingling of the Dravidic and Indo Aryan languages, with the presence of the one not subdued by the other. In terms of the social composition, Odisha has on its land amazing diverse tribal communities. The continuity of cultures in Odisha is a lot more pronounced than in the states to its south or north. Therefore, when one thinks of various forms of creative expression of the Adivasis, one naturally turns to Odisha for the most alluring instances, be it dance, painting, song, theatre, music, craft, traditional medicine, agricultural practices, rural architecture and such. All these have been kept alive by Adivasis for centuries through oral traditions. Therefore, when one looks at the oral tradition (or traditions) of Odisha, one must at once think a little beyond the normal expectations that folklore brings to us. Perhaps, the only rival to the richness of Odisha's folklore can be found in the folklore in the north-eastern states. In such instances, the folklore, approached from any of the external manifestation such as music, literature or production practices, invariably brings to us a whole way of life, an entire civilization and its unique world view.

Dr. Anand Mahanand's translation of the Odisha folktales brings to the reader traditional stories from four Adivasi communities: the Paraja, the Gadaba, the Bonda and the Didai. Of these, the folklore of the Bonda and the Didai communities had received some attention from Verrier Elwin, and the Paraja community had made a lasting impact on one of the all time greatest writers of Oriya, Gopinath Mohnaty, who worked among

the Parajas as a young government officer when he started his literary career as well. The Gadaba community has got scattered over Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, and is linguistically much different from the three others, in that the language is closer to Telugu than to Oriya. To that extent, the attitude of the Gadaba community to its own past too is strikingly different from the attitude that the Paraja community has.

The collection initially put together in Oriya by Ashok Kumar Mishra and Girish Chandra Dash under the title *Aranyara Swara: Dakshina Odissar Adivasi Lokakatha*, and now brought into lucid English translation by Dr. Anand Mahanand, thus, demonstrates the vast difference between one Adivasi community and another, showing at the same time that the forest forming the backdrop of the tales is no longer as kind as it had been in the tradition and memory of Adivasis. In order to know the great loss of the forest culture and alienation from the tradition overtaking these communities, one has to travel through the southern districts of Orissa. The landed coffee planter the mining satraps, the development enthusiasts, have all been bringing down the ramparts of the Adivasi memory in the area. Repeated spells of undernourishment have driven these communities to desperate political ways and not just pauperised them but also vandalized their valuable culture. Clearly, the Parajas of Gopinath Mohanty and the Bondas of Verrier Elwin no more are the children of nature in the sense we from the cities tend to understand the expression. There is a lot more there happening and moving that we need to understand. It is for this reason that the stories brought together originally in Oriya, and gratefully the ones that caught the attention of Dr. Mahanand, are of importance to all of us in India. One likes to hope that the translator will continue the pursuit and bring to readers outside Odisha more such collections so that a complete picture of the cultural tapestry of Odisha can be seen one-piece. I am sure the readers will welcome this carefully rendered volume and will spare a thought for the traditional cultures that are being invisibly wiped out of existence in our time.

Ganesh Devy
Baroda
November 2012

Bhasha

Preface

If we wish to discuss the origin and growth of folktales, we need to go back to pre-historic times. Perhaps, folktales came into existence as soon as man started speaking. There will be no shoot if the seed does not sprout. But what is the seed of this particular shoot? A number of questions might have occurred several times in the minds of primitive man by looking at Nature and the vast universe and these *ëwhyí* and *ëhowí* questions might have led to the seed of folktales and taken the shape of today's vast tree of folktales. Folktales are oral narratives that are passed from generation to generation. So we may call them *shruti*. Generally by *shruti*, we refer to the Vedas, but the Vedas too were in the form of folktales. If the Vedas reflect the life of contemporary society, then it would not be out of place to call folktales the mirror of society.

But who is the creator of folktales? There is no single creator of folktales. As Nature changes itself in course of time, folktales also change themselves and take various shapes. The form of folktales that we hear in the present is not the same as in earlier times. In the process of transmission, there might have been some modifications and innovations. So, all are creators of folktales. In folktales there is no reflection of one kind of duty or of one community. Sometimes, we discover the relationship between this world and the other world. Sometimes, man's superstitions and evil systems take the shape of tales. Sometimes the listener enjoys the imaginary sense of the teller. At times, human beings discover themselves through folktales.

The characters in folktales need not always be human beings. Animals, birds, insects, flies, plants, trees, rivers, mountains, flowers, fruits all these become characters in folktales. They speak, dance,

sing and behave as human beings.

Indian culture is intrinsically related to mysticism, so we can discover mysticism in different facets of Indian culture. Folktales are not an exception. Literature is for the well-being of society. It has morals in it. Even if it is not easy to pick up the thread of the argument from a tale, often it does have a moral hidden in it. Because we believe in mysticism, the morals are not obvious many a times.

Various folk tales exist in different corners of Orissa. Though we find some differences in them, we can notice many similarities. A folktale, wherever it belongs, when it reaches a particular region, the art, culture, and manner of people of that particular region gets reflected within it. Therefore, it is not proper to say that these tales belong to this definite region. When we talk of the folktales of Southern Orissa, it would not be out of place to touch upon these issues.

Southern Orissa spreads over the vast region of the new Gajapati district to Malkangiri district. This region is predominantly a tribal inhabited region. Tribal people of different communities live here. Though there are similarities among them, there are also a lot differences in their life styles and social practices.

In *Aranyara Swara*, we have included the tales that are prevalent in the societies of Gadaba, Banda, Didai and Paraja. Paraja people live in Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur and some regions of Malkangiri. The Bondas live in the Mudulipara *ghati* of Malkangiri district. The Gadabas live in some regions of Koraput and Malkangiri district, the Didais live in the Kutumulu cave regions of Malkangiri district.

There are books already published on the folktales of different regions of Orissa. But there has not been any attempt to collect and publish the folk tales of southern Orissa. As a result, the folk tales are on the verge of disappearing. We have made an attempt to collect them from the heart of this region and have them published.

We came across difficulties in collecting these tales. Although these stories belonged to the communities, it was not an easy task to collect them. A major difficulty was language. Each tribal

community of this region has a language of oneself. They usually don't narrate the stories. Instead, they will sing the tale in their own dialect. Because stories are usually not narrated just like that. They are mostly sung by women. Hence we recorded the tales in their languages in cassettes and transformed them into Oriya through a bi-lingual machine. That is why we have retained the original version of their dialect, especially of the songs. Later we rendered them into Oriya translation. We had to ask people of that community to verify whether the tales belonged to their community. After this was ascertained, we published them.

In these tales, animals are the main characters. Each story reflects the economic and social life of the community. The readers will certainly get some idea regarding the language, culture, traditions, marriage rituals, dress pattern, and ornaments of the concerned tribe. Like the tales of other regions of our country, the Southern Orissa tales also depict the relationship with different animals. We also find some superstitions and evil systems that are prevalent among these communities. Above all, tribals have been victimized through the ages, this too is reflected in these stories. We say many things about the tribal people. Have we really accepted them as our own? Do we really know everything about them? We still need to know many aspects about them.

If the readers benefit a bit from our efforts, we will be content that our efforts have been fulfilled.

Ashok Kumar Mishra
Girish Chandra Dash

Preface

Tales are the oldest form of communication and teaching. Even before the creation of the written word there were tales. The tribal people of India in general and the tribes of Orissa in particular have a rich tradition of folk tales. Even though literacy has percolated into their habitats, they have still preserved their story telling tradition.

A storyteller in tribal society is just one among them, but they have extraordinary skills of communication, narration, articulation and performance. There are so many stories connected together that they sound like one. Most story tellers happen to be women. They narrate stories on different occasions as while working in the fields and during festivals and rituals.

The folk tales included here are taken from different tribal languages in Orissa such as Paraja, Gadaba, Bonda and Didai. These tribal communities live in the southern parts of Orissa, which stretches from the district of Gajapati to Malkangiri. Each tribe is different in terms of its cultural and social structure and these folktales reflect some of these differences. Folktales do travel and change over time and for this reason, their ownership is not confined to a particular tribe. There have been influences, assimilations and variations and as these tales reveal, certain social and cultural practices are specific to certain tribes. Because of this feature, some of the folktales are identified with a particular community. It is worth discussing some of the specific cultural practices here.

The communities these tales talk about largely depend upon agriculture, food gathering and daily wage work. Usually, a tribal village is surrounded by forests, fields and streams and the fields are situated near the forests. The forests are cleared and cultivated. Here one needs to understand the context of the forest differently. A forest

need not cover huge mountains. For these communities, forest means their surrounding area outside their hamlets with trees, fields and wild animals. People go to the fields early in the morning and return home in the evening or at noon. If they don't come home at midday, their food is carried to them by a family member. These small scale farmers grow rice, mandia, maize, pulses, groundnuts, and vegetables such as cucumber, bittergourd and ridgegourd. As a child growing up in the neighbouring district of this region, I myself have participated in many of these activities and have acquired first hand experience of their culture and tradition.

The tribals have their own gods and goddesses. They worship trees, animals and the priest belongs to their own community. They sacrifice birds and animals in honour of their deities. They also offer vermillion, rice, fruits and flowers.

These communities don't have a dowry system. Instead, the groom has to pay a bride price. If he is unable to do so, he has to work for the bride's parents. As these tales reflect, women take part in all spheres of life. They move out of their domestic confines and work in the fields and forests.

I was delighted when I came across the book *Aranyara Swara: Dakshina Odissara Adivasi Lokakatha (Voices of the Forest: Tribal Folktales from Southern Orissa)*, a collection of tribal folk tales in Oriya collected and edited by Ashok Kumar Mishra and Girish Chandra Dash and published by the National Book Trust. The stories are organized around different tribes. I went through them and liked them very much and decided to translate the collection so that non-Oriya speakers get an opportunity to enjoy these stories. These stories can be read by children as well. This is not a literary translation, but I have tried to retain the original nuances.

Stories have been playing the role of educating people since time immemorial. Our religious leaders preached through stories and parables. The text of *Panchatantra* was written to motivate students to learn. Children like stories and hence it is an effective resource for language learning. Through these stories learners will be exposed to grammatical items, structures, vocabulary and different language skills in English. They will be also be exposed to the richness of

tribal culture which forms a significant part of Indian tradition.

I am grateful to Prof. G.N. Devy who took keen interest in the translation and kindly accepted its publication. I am thankful to him for his affection, encouragement and guidance. I would like to thank my colleague, Prof. Dilip K. Das at the Department of Cultural Studies, EFL University for going through the drafts and for his valuable suggestions. Without his help, the book would not have seen the light of the day. I would like to thank Sonal Baxi and Purva Prakash for shaping the manuscript into a book. I also thank Ashok Kumar Mishra and Girish Chandra Dash for all their help.

Finally, I dedicate this book to the numerous story tellers who are the source of such a rich and lively tradition.

Anand Mahanand
Hyderabad
September 2012



Paraja Folktales





How Was Man Created?

The goddesses Maui, Hundi and others created the Earth. After creating the Earth, they created forests, birds and animals. But they were still not happy with their creation. So they decided to create man. But how could man be created?

Suddenly a rock cracked and split into two. Between the two fragments sprouted two shoots of bamboo. The goddesses transformed the shoots into humans.

Of these, one became a boy and the other became a girl. As soon as they were created, all the animals of the jungle surrounded them. A wild boar came and fed them milk, a peacock provided them the shade of its feathers. A rabbit danced to entertain them. Thus the girl and the boy began to live in the forest.

As the boy and girl started growing, the goddesses felt worried. They thought, 'The boy and girl have been behaving like brother and sister. If they continue like this, they will not grow their family.'

The goddesses thought of a plan. They entered into the girl's body and made the girl say to the boy, 'Brother, I like to eat *amla*.'

The boy did not want to displease the girl. So he went to get *amla*. When they were separated they were both affected by small-pox which spread all over their bodies. They began to look different. When the boy returned with the *amla* the girl could not recognize him. Slowly, the effect of the small pox faded away. Their relationship as brother and sister also ended and they became husband and wife. They gave birth to children and thus men and women came into the world.



Man Comes and Goes Bare

Long, long ago, a boy was born in a Paraja family. His parents were very happy. At that time even newborn babies could speak. The parents asked the baby, 'Dear! How did you come into the world? Where have you come from? Where will you go? And how ?'

The boy replied quickly, 'I have come bare and I will go bare.'

The parents could not understand the mystery. When they asked the boy to explain, he said, 'I will tell you when I grow up.' The parents thought that the boy would grow up to be a wise man. So they asked him, 'Dear, what do you want us to do for you?'

He said, 'Listen, when I grow a bit older, tie a thread around my waist and put a ring on my nose and ears.' Days passed by. The boy grew up. As he had said to his parents, they put a ring around his nose, earrings in his ears and tied a thread around his waist. His parents were very happy, but they still found it difficult to understand what the boy had said earlier. Many questions came to their mind. They thought they would ask him when he grew a bit older. Finally, the last living hour for the boy to live arrived. The boy knew that he would die soon. So he called his parents and said, 'I am going to die, so I will explain to you what I had said earlier. Listen, man comes and leaves bare. He does not take anything with him when he dies. So you should remove the ornaments from my body before I die. But even then there will still remain some desire. Therefore, you should take a flat basket of grains, a pot of grains and a vessel as well. Break the pot before my corpse reaches the cemetery. This means that I am



free from worldly bondage. I had not brought anything with me and will not take anything with me when I leave this world. I came bare and will go bare.'

The parents understood the meaning of the boy's words. They mourned the death of their son and performed all the rituals.



The Simuli Thorn

Once upon a time there lived an old Paraja couple in a village. They had a son and a daughter. Their son was hard-working and their daughter very beautiful. Whoever saw the girl would pause for a moment to look at her. She had large eyes and slim legs. The village youngsters would keep staring at her when she walked along the village street. People called her the slim-legged girl.

The son went to the forest everyday to work. At noon the sister would come to him with gruel and leafy vegetable curry. After her brother had finished his food, she would take the vessels and go back to her house. In this manner time passed by. The boy thought that his parents wanted to get his sister married to him and so they sent her with food for him. This was long ago and social customs were not very rigid. The boy started to behave in a romantic way with his sister. But his sister did not like this at all. She went and told her parents about her brother's behaviour. She also told them that she would not take food for her brother anymore.

But the parents did not pay any heed to their daughter and sent her again with food for her brother. One day her brother proposed marriage to his sister. She went home and wept. But to whom could she tell her woes? Her parents were not prepared to listen to her.

The next day again her parents sent her with food. She saw that her brother was felling a tree in the distance. She put the food down, wrapped her sari around a *simuli* tree and disappeared into the forest. After some time the boy saw his sister's sari from a distance. He thought that his sister was sitting there. He came and embraced the



simuli tree. The thorn hurt his body. Blood oozed from his body and he suffered pain. Then he understood why his sister had wrapped the sari around the tree: to point out that he would suffer if he married his sister the same way as he suffered by embracing the simuli tree.

Since that day nobody has thought of marrying one's own sister.



The Mouse and the Dove

In a forest there lived a mouse king in a hole under a tree. The mouse king was very powerful. Hence, he had three wives. They were the Liti bird, the Crow and the Dove. The king loved them all, but he didn't know who among his wives loved him most. All his three wives actually loved him but even then he was not happy with it. So he thought of a plan to learn the truth. He called his wives and said, 'See, I love you all and you too love me very much. However, I am going to die today. Please take care of yourself.' Having said this, the king went into his hole.

All his wives became very sad. They started weeping, recalling the good qualities of the king. The liti bird wept,

I am liti, I am liti
Dead is the mouse king
I shall wash clothes
Hitting them on the rock.

Then the crow wept
I am the crow, I am the crow
The mouse king is dead
Come and eat
Weep no more.

Hearing the liti and the crow weep, the dove could not control herself. She too started to weep.



How beautiful is your hair, my lord
How beautiful are your teeth
Your tail is like that of a cow's tail, my lord!

The mouse king was listening to their mourning songs. After the dove's weeping was over the mouse king came out of his hole and stood before them with a stick in his hand. When they saw the mouse they thought that it was his ghost and were about to run.

'Stop. Where are you going? You think that I am a ghost of the mouse king? No, I am not dead. Oh Liti, just let me listen to what you were saying when you wept?' Liti sang as she had sung before, upon which he gave her a thrashing and said, 'Go away, I won't keep you.' Liti went her way.

Now it was the turn of the crow. 'Just tell me, how did you weep?' The crow sang as she had done earlier. He thrashed the crow and she went away.

At last he asked the dove to describe how she had wept. The dove wept,

How beautiful is your hair, my lord
How beautiful are your teeth
Your tail is like that of cow tail, oh lord !

The mouse said, 'You indeed love me. The other two were lying. I just wanted to know this. So I feigned my death.' Then the mouse king and the dove lived happily together.



The Story of the Wild Root

In the district of Koraput there was a forest range. In the forest there lived a king. His subjects were the Paraja adivasi people. The king was very exploitative and unjust. He would ill-treat his subjects. The people struggled for their livelihood. They had to give half of whatever they earned from their daily labour in the forest to the king. If they didn't, the king's people would come to their home and take away their earnings.

In the kingdom lived an old man and an old woman. They did not have a son or daughter, so they had to work hard even in their old age. For if they didn't work, what would they eat? They did not have land to cultivate and for that reason they had to depend upon the forest. The old woman would get up early every morning and carry a basket on her head and the old man would pick up an axe. They would leave for the forest. In the forest they would dig wild roots and chop wood. During the kendu season they would collect the *kendu* fruit, during the mahul season they would collect *mahul* flowers and in the mango season they would gather mangoes. This was their food. But all that they collected, they had to give half to the king or else there was no respite from his cruelty. What could one do, life had to go on! Thus they led their life.

The old woman, however, would feel very sad. Tears rolled down her eyes. She thought that if she had a son, she would not have to work so hard. The son would work and bring things home and then they would live a happy life. 'Let it be, the goddess has not blessed



me. What is the use of blaming one's fate?' Her husband would console her, 'Listen, do we not have age and energy? If we want we can have a son and he would kill this unjust king.' But the old woman did not pay any heed to what her husband said.

One day, they started for the forest when it was nearing noon. The old man was hungry. He said, 'My dear, give me what you have. I am very hungry.' The old man had brought some mango-shell gruel and some wild roots. The old lady had plucked some *sal* leaves. So she served the mango-shell gruel and passed on some salt to him.

The old man spread a few leaves on the floor and lay down for some time. The old woman saw that it was going to be noon time soon. She woke up her husband saying, 'Won't you dig out wild potatoes today?' 'Yes, I certainly will. What is the hurry?' said the old man.

Then he started digging for wild potatoes. But he didn't find any. He got angry. He thought, 'I have dug so much but haven't got anything, but no I won't give up, I shall go on digging till I find some wild potatoes.'

He went on digging. When he dug, mud started falling. Inside the hole itself he could see a huge gap. In that gap lay a handsome boy, sleeping. Near the boy stood a peacock with its feathers spread out and a tiger feeding her milk to the boy. The old man said to his wife, 'Listen, the God of the Jungle has given us this boy because we are childless, or else how can you expect a boy in this hole? Come, we will take him and look after him as our son.'

The old woman said, 'Don't you see? The tiger is feeding him milk and so many animals are wandering around. Will they let you take the child?' But the old man insisted. He said that they should certainly take the boy with them. So he went into the hole and full of fear, took the child. Fortunately, the tiger and the peacock did not do him any harm. They let him take the baby. The old man felt some courage. He came out of the pit with the baby. The old woman was very happy. Her joy knew no bounds. The old man and woman paid their respect to the forest goddesses and left for home.



The old man and woman brought up the child as their own son. As the boy grew up, the king became even more atrocious. The boy thought that when he grew up, he would kill the king. He began to play with a bamboo sword. When his parents asked what he was going to do with the bamboo sword, he said that he would kill the king with it some day. The old man and woman felt perplexed. They were worried about the child. They thought that if the king came to know about his plan, he would certainly kill them. But the boy was not ready to understand.

Days passed on and slowly the boy became a young man. He heard that the king had a beautiful daughter. He thought he would kill the king and marry his daughter. One day the old man and his wife went to the palace to pay tax. The boy accompanied them. As soon as they saw the king, the old couple greeted him with folded hands, but the son raised one of his legs instead. People became worried. They thought that the boy would get killed. The king was enraged. He asked, 'Who are you? Why did you raise your leg when you saw me? Do you not know that I am king of the Paraja kingdom? I shall separate your head from your body.'

The boy was not prepared to give up. He said to the king, 'Go, you have an iron sword and so you are so proud. Your iron sword is nothing before my bamboo sword. If you have strength, fight me.' The king was furious. He frowned at the boy. The old couple tried their best to dissuade him. But who would listen to them? The king and the boy fought fiercely. When the king was trying to pull out his iron sword, the boy thrust his bamboo sword into the king's stomach. The king cried out in pain and died immediately.

The princess was watching the scene from a distance. As soon as the king died she came near the boy and said, 'What you have done is right. Now we will all live in happiness.' The boy said, 'Yes all is well but I would like to marry you.' The princess was extremely happy to hear this. The boy married the princess and all of them—the old couple, the boy and the princess—were happy. The Paraja boy became king in the Paraja country. The sorrow of the Parajas came to an end and they all lived a happy life.



The Story of the Cock

There lived an old couple in a particular village. They had no son or daughter. They survived on what they managed to get from their fields. They did not want to make additional efforts to earn more. After all, for whom should they work more? There was nobody besides the two of them. So they lived a contented life by themselves.

One day they went to the *haat* to sell *mandia*. After they had sold their *mandia*, the old woman saw a man selling chicken nearby. She had two coins in her hand. The old couple bought the chicken with one coin. The old woman's husband asked her, 'What will you do with the chicken?' She replied, 'We will take care of it. You know, we have nobody in our house. The house feels empty. One does not like living in an empty house. If we take the chicken home and take care of it, it will wander around the house and the village. The house will feel lived in. We will feel nice. When it grows older and starts eating grains from the basket and creates nuisance, I will chase it...then it will come back again and again. I will...' The old man said, 'Well, enough! Let us go back. It is already late.'

The old woman thought that her husband would not accept what she had said. How did it matter to him whether they had children or not. He stayed drunk all the time. If he had been in his senses, he would understand her agony. Still the old woman persisted, 'If this chicken wanders around the house, won't it sound like the wandering of a child?' The old man kept walking ahead without paying any heed to her; the old woman followed him.



On reaching home, the old woman kept the chicken in a basket, covered it with a lid and kept a stone on it. Or else, the cat would come and eat it. The old woman loved the chick very much. Days passed. The chick started calling, 'chin,' 'chin' and then 'tang,' 'tang.' A red crown appeared on his head. He wandered all over the house. In a way, the old woman's loneliness came to an end. She would call out to the cock, 'shi-shan-shan' and make him fly. The cock also loved to be chased. The old woman would get angry at times but there was pleasure in her anger. The old man never even glanced at the cock. He would unnecessarily get angry with his wife whenever he saw the cock with her. Days passed thus. One day the old woman got bells from the market and tied them around the cock's leg. As the cock wandered around the house the tinkle of the bells sounded pleasant. The old woman felt as if her own son was wandering around the house. Her joy doubled.

The cock grew older. The crown on his head became bigger and his tail curved. His tail came up and bent down. The old woman saw the cock and remarked to the old man, 'Do you see? This is a cock now. He will call 'coko-re-ko' after some days. Won't you feel nice?' The old man kept quiet and did not reply. Earlier the old man had hated the chick but now he wanted to eat the cock. He thought of how he could eat it. One day he, along with another man from a nearby village, hatched a plan to kill and eat the cock.

The next day, the man from the other village arrived and asked to buy the cock for two rupees. The old woman refused to sell the cock. Her husband insisted, 'Can't you see how the cock makes the whole place dirty? If he pays five rupees, we will sell it off. All problems will end. He is surely not your son who will bury you when you die? Listen, we will sell him and buy a nice saree for you with the money.'

The old woman did not agree with her husband. But the man from the other village gave five rupees and took away the cock. The old woman wept bitterly for the cock. Ignoring her, her husband followed the other man.

They together went to the nearby village, killed the cock and



cooked its meat. The old man had some money. He bought some liquor and they both drank and feasted on the meat. The old man came back home in the middle of the night and fell down senseless. In the morning he found his wife weeping,

The house has fallen empty, old fellow
You sold the cock
There is no more the sound of bells.
You sold my cock
The house has fallen empty.

As the old man started consoling his wife, she replied, 'Don't say anything. You ate my son.' The old man was moved when he heard the word 'son'. He then realized how much the old woman had loved the cock. He realized his mistake but there was nothing he could do. The cock was already digested. He had no words to console his wife. The old man wept, remembering the cock.



How Cocks began to Live in the Forest

In a certain village, there was a money lender who belonged to the Paraja tribe. In his house a hen hatched chicks. The money lender had a brinjal garden in front of his house. The hen would dig the earth under the brinjal tree, spread her wings and doze off. Just above her head there was a brinjal. The brinjal thought, 'If my mother tree lives forever, then the mother hen and her chicks will come here everyday.' The brinjal felt very happy. One day the hen fell down while perched on the tree. She did not realise that it was already evening. A jackal came and grabbed her. The brinjal became sad. It consoled the chicks and sent them back home. They slept in the corner of the money lender's house.

The chicks would come out in the morning and sleep under the brinjal tree everyday. The brinjal loved them very much. Slowly the brinjal got ripe. It said to the chicks, 'O! Nephews, look, I am now ripe. I may fall any moment. If you rest under me, you will all get crushed and die. So you should sleep somewhere else.'

The chicks replied, 'Uncle, when you leave, who will take care of us?' The brinjal said, 'See, this is the law of the world. We are all born one day and will die some day. There is no point worrying about it. Do not worry about me. Think about yourselves. Beware of that jackal. He killed your mother. He will eat you as well. So be careful!' Then the chicks left the place. They had moved only a few yards when the brinjal fell down. Thap! They thought, 'If the brinjal had not warned us, we would have died today.' They were thankful to the



brinjal. Then they began to rest under another tree.

Days passed. The chicks grew older. They would go and sleep in a corner of the money lender's house every night. However, they felt scared of the jackal. The jackal had his eye on the chicks. He was looking for a chance to pounce on them. One day he came to the chicks. The chicks panicked. He found them to be terribly afraid and said, 'Don't feel scared of me, my nephews and nieces! Do you think that I have come to eat you all? No, never. I indeed repent even today for having killed your mother. I still suffer with pain and repentance. To get rid of that guilt I have come to see how you are. Do let me know if you have any problem.' The chicks felt scared. They trembled in fear. They did not utter a single word. Then the jackal asked them, 'Do you get food to eat these days?' The chicks replied, 'Yes.' The jackal asked them further, 'Do you have a place to sleep at night? Where do you sleep?' They said, 'Well, we sleep in that corner of the house.' Then the jackal said, 'Oh, you should all leave now or else you may come across ghosts on your way.' The chickens headed back to the money lender's house. The jackal left happily for his home.

The chicks feared that the jackal would certainly come there that night. They thought, 'If we sleep here, we will certainly die.' The jackal came in the middle of the night. He looked for the chicks but he could not find them. So he returned disappointed.

The next day the jackal came and asked, 'Didn't you sleep in that corner last night? I looked for you but couldn't find you there.' They said, 'Uncle, we were scared of ghosts, so we slept in the room where the grinder is kept.' Then he asked, 'Where will you sleep tonight?' They replied, 'In the grinding room.' It was evening. The chicks slept near the hearth instead of in the grinding room. The jackal came again but could not find them. The next day he again asked, 'Where did you sleep last night?' They replied, 'We felt very scared. So we slept near the hearth.' Then he asked, 'Where shall you sleep tonight?' They replied, 'Near the same hearth.' He said, 'Alright' and left. In the night the jackal came and looked near the hearth but did



not find them there. The following morning he asked them, 'Where did you sleep in the night?' They said, 'We were afraid. So we slept near the fire and we will sleep near that corner again.' The jackal realised their cunning and left.

In the night the chicks slept inside the bottle gourd near the verandah. The jackal came and looked for them but could not find them there. He was very hungry. He thought that he would eat some rice from the bottle gourd and went near to see if the chicks were chirping inside. He found them there. The jackal was very happy. When he knew that they were inside the bottle gourd, he took hold of it and ran towards the forest. On the way, one by one the chicks began to fall from the gourd. The ones in the gourd sang:

Do not take us through the uneven path, uncle
Do not take us through the shallow path
Take us up the hill, uncle
Do not take us through the sand
Take us through the mud.

The jackal did not understand the song. He did not know where to go. Even then he continued to run. Suddenly, his legs slipped into a hole. The bottle gourd broke and the chicks came out and ran to the forest. The jackal was helpless. The chicks flew away and became chicks of the forest.



The Cock's Meat is Tasty!

Once an old Paraja man went to the haat and bought a young chicken that he kept in his house. He gave the chicken mandia or rice grains to eat everyday. Soon the feathers of the chick began to grow and it turned into a cock. The cock called 'cock-re-ko' instead of 'chin-chin.' After some days, the crest cropped up on his head and the old man came to know that it had grown into a cock.

The old Paraja man was very happy. He thought that once the cock grew bigger, he would get some liquor, roast the cock and enjoy it with liquor. The cock, however, grew slowly. One day when the old man was returning to the forest, he saw a man distilling liquor. He said, 'Brother! Please lend me some liquor. I shall pay you back when I reap my mandia. Please do not refuse. I want to take home some liquor and enjoy it with roasted chicken. I have a guest at my house and I wish to impress him.' The man gave some liquor to the old Paraja man.

The old man placed his axe and the liquor pot on his shoulders and came home. By the time he reached home it was already evening. Immediately on arriving home, he went to the cock. As the fire was burning he could not see clearly. As he went and caught the legs of the cock, the cock asked his master, 'Master! What are you doing?' The old man replied, 'Don't you know what I am doing? I have brought some liquor. Now I will roast and eat you along with liquor.' The cock said, 'Yes, certainly you will eat me. But just wait for a few days because I am too young and small now. If you kill me today, you will get very little meat out of me. But if you wait for me to grow and



then kill me, you will have more meat.' The old man thought that the cock was right. So he drank all the liquor and slept without taking any food.

After many days had passed, the old man went and caught the cock. The cock said, 'Master, you think that I shall fly away somewhere, don't you? But I shall not do so. You are my master! You have fed me everyday. If you eat me, I will find salvation.' The old man felt happy and let go of the cock. The cock continued to live with him. The old man felt that the cock would not go anywhere.

Days passed. One morning, the cock came and said to the old man, 'Master, I have now grown up. You can get some liquor and eat me.' The old man felt delighted with the thought. He went under a tamarind tree, prepared a hearth with three stones and lit a fire. Then he put an earthen vessel over it. The cock went up the tree and sat on a branch.

He said, 'Master, put some oil in the vessel and keep some salt nearby. Then you may go and have your bath. When you come back I would be cooked in the vessel and be ready for you to eat me.' The old man did as the cock had said and went to have his bath. Meanwhile, the cock started relieving himself from the tamarind tree. His excrement fell into the vessel below.

The old man returned at noon. When the cock saw him, it flew from the tree, never to reappear again. The old man thought that there was cooked meat in the vessel. But as he was about to put it in his mouth, a terrible smell came off it. The old man realized that it was not meat. He looked up the tree but could not see the cock. The old man felt cheated but he was helpless.



Korey Bonga

Once there was a small Paraja village. It was surrounded by forests. In that village there lived an old Paraja widow. She had a son. His name was Korey Bonga. Korey Bonga's four cousins lived near his house.

Bonga's mother always remained worried about her son because he was foolish and lazy. So she always guarded him. One day she said to her son, 'Son, you do not do anything. See, your cousins are so clever. They bring so many things home. You don't even break a straw, or get even some leaves home. How will you survive? How will you manage your household? I feel very worried. As long as I have strength, I can work and get you everything. What will you do after that?'

On hearing his mother's words, Korey Bonga quietly came out of his house. The old woman went to work. When she came back she found a heap of straw gathered in the house. She asked Bonga, 'My dear son, who has brought this?' Korey Bonga said, 'I have done it. You said that I don't break a straw or get even some leaves. So today I have brought some leaves. But why are you so angry?' The old woman did not know what to do. She got furious and said, 'You are indeed very foolish! You simply don't understand. The village boys are so sharp. They can go and court the princess and come home safe. But you don't understand even a thing. If I ask you to do something, you end up doing something else.'

During the night the old woman became worried. She thought,



‘This fellow is really a fool. Will he now go and really court the princess? If he does so, there will be a big problem.’ Worrying about this she did not get any sleep. When it was morning, Korey Bonga got up, brushed his teeth, took some gruel in the pot-gourd-shell and left. The old woman followed him. Korey Bonga reached the palace garden. There was a well in the garden. At that moment the princess came to fetch water from the well. Korey Bonga recognised the princess. He hid himself behind the bush. The old woman was observing all this. Then Korey Bonga took a pebble and flung it at the princess’ eye. The princess cried out in pain and sat down. The old woman went to her son and asked, ‘What have you done?’ Korey Bonga said, ‘You asked me to shoot the eye of the princess. So I did exactly what you asked me to do. Why are you worried?’ She said, ‘You have damaged her eyes. If the king comes to know of this he will hang us. Let us go back before anybody comes to know.’ They pushed the princess into the well and ran away from the village. When they reached home, the old woman shouted at her son. Bonga was really sad but he kept quiet.

After that he did not venture out or do any mischief. One day his cousins called him to come with them and work in the landlord’s fields. His cousins did their work but Bonga did not do his part. He even did not pull out the weeds. In the evening the landlord said that he had found that one area remained un-weeded. The landlord said, ‘You have not done your job properly.’ Bonga was silent. The others said, ‘Bonga was weeding that part and has left it un-weeded. The landlord said, ‘I see. Bonga has done all this work and you haven’t done any.’ Then he took Bonga with him and left for his house. He gave everyone’s wages to Bonga.

Bonga’s cousins were unhappy with him. They felt surprised and wondered, ‘How did the foolish Bonga become so clever?’ They whispered among themselves and decided to set Bonga’s house on fire. Bonga overheard all their plans. The following morning he collected the grains and ran away with his mother. His cousins thought that Bonga had died in the house and became very happy. A villager had followed Bonga. He asked Bonga, ‘Where are you going



my dear boy, so early in the morning?’ Bonga replied, ‘I am going to sell ash.’ The villager asked, ‘What are you saying? Have you ever heard of people selling ash?’ Korey Bonga said, ‘Did I ask you to buy my ash? You know, somebody wanted to pay a gram of gold for the ash, but I refused.’ The villager thought that the ash might have some extraordinary quality. So he said to Bonga, ‘The market is so far away. Why should you walk so long? I shall give you twenty gold coins. You take these and give me the ash.’ Bonga did not agree at first but the man insisted. So Bonga took the coins and gave away the ashes to the businessman.

Bonga’s cousins were very angry to see him coming from the market. His house was no longer there. His mother lived under a banyan tree. So he went to his mother and asked her to get a measuring vessel from his uncle’s house to measure the gold coins. The old woman went and asked for a measuring vessel. Bonga’s cousins were very clever. They wanted to know what Bonga’s mother was going to measure. They applied some cow dung at the bottom of the earthen vessel and lent it to Bonga’s mother. Korey Bonga saw that a layer of cow dung had been put on the bottom of the earthen vessel. He measured the coins and stuck two coins at the bottom of the vessel. Then he asked his mother to give the vessel back to his cousins. When his cousins saw the two gold coins, they felt curious and asked Bonga’s mother to tell them the whole story. She told them all the facts. They thought that they would also burn their house, collect the ash and sell them to get gold coins. So they burnt their house, collected the ash and took it to the market and went around shouting, ‘Ash! Please buy ash.’ People thought that these young men were foolish and looked at each other as they heard them shouting.

No one bought their ash. It became time for the market to close. The brothers did not get any customers. So they left the ash in the market and left for home. On their way they realized that Korey Bonga had cheated them. They decided to kill him. It was already night when they reached home. They went under the banyan tree and found him sleeping. They tied Korey Bonga’s hands and legs, put him in a basket, covered its lid and carried him to the river. Korey



Bonga did not say anything. He just lay down there in the night.

Soon it was morning. The brothers thought, 'Korey Bonga will die anyway. So let us go and ask him for his last wish. Then we can throw him into the river along with the basket.' So they went and asked him, 'Korey Bonga, you are going to die in any case. Tell us your last wish.' Bonga said to them, 'I would like to eat some rice and chicken curry.' They kept him there and went to the village to look for a chicken.

Korey Bonga was helpless. His hands and legs were tied. How could he release himself? He heard the noise of a wooden stick that was tied around a cow's neck. He shouted, 'The princess is waiting for me. My cousins have gone to get chicken curry and rice for me. Oh, it is getting late. What shall I do?' The cowherd heard this and came near him. He asked, 'What happened?' Korey Bonga said, 'This is a magic basket. If someone sits inside it and the basket is then covered, tied and thrown into the river, the Princess who is in the river will marry that person. But what to do? My cousins have gone to get rice and chicken curry for me. I am waiting for the food. I am hungry. How can I get in without any food?' The cowherd was eager to marry the princess. He said, 'Why don't you allow me to sit in the basket. I want to see how it feels. You could wait for sometime.' Korey Bonga agreed and asked the cowherd to open the lid of the basket. The cowherd opened it and untied Bonga. Korey Bonga came out of the basket. Then the cowherd boy requested to be put inside the basket and thrown into the river. Korey Bonga refused at first, but then finally agreed. 'All right,' he said, 'You go and marry the princess. I shall marry another princess.' The cowherd was very happy. He got into the basket. Korey Bonga shut the basket and threw it into the river. Then he led the cows toward his house. On his way he saw his cousins coming with rice and chicken curry. They asked him, 'Where did you get this herd of cows?' He said, 'You had left the basket. Somebody came and threw the basket into the river. Inside the water there is a wonderful kingdom. Our forefathers live there. They were very happy to see me. One of them gave this herd of cows to me. The others asked me to come and take their herd of cows on another day.'



Bonga's cousins asked him to throw them into the river. Bonga was reluctant, but they requested him again. They brought four baskets with lids and went to the river with Korey Bonga. Korey Bonga put each of them inside a basket, covered the lid and floated each of the baskets into the water one by one. Thus, all the four cousins drowned in the river.



The Tiger and the Princess

Once a man went to cut trees. While cutting down a tree his axe slipped from his hands and fell. He looked for it but could not find it. How could he cut trees any longer if he had no axe ? He could not buy another axe. So he cried out aloud, 'Whoever has taken my axe, please give it back to me. I will give you my daughter in marriage.'

A tiger heard this cry. He came with an axe and said, 'Do not be afraid. You are my father-in-law. Take the axe and give me your daughter in marriage.' What could the farmer do now? He had already given his word. But he could certainly not push his daughter into the tiger's mouth. He thought for a while and said, 'You are my son-in-law. Come to my house and take my daughter with you.'

So they both went to the man's house. The man narrated everything to his wife and daughter. His daughter was unwilling to marry the tiger. The tiger, on the other hand, insisted that he would take the girl with him. People convinced the girl and finally bid her farewell. The girl went along with the tiger who took her to his cave. Near the cave stood a big tree, a river flowed nearby. On reaching the cave the tiger said to the girl, 'You stay at home. I shall be back soon.' The girl went inside and looked around the cave. She felt surprised and afraid when she saw human bones, skeletons and scalps. She became nervous. She went to the river and explained her sorrow to the river. Then she saw a tall tree standing on the bank of the river. The tree had a big hollow space in the middle. The girl got inside the tree and sat there. When some villagers saw the tree, they started



cutting it. The girl cried out, 'Don't kill me, please don't kill me.' The villagers thought that a god was speaking from inside the tree. So they cut the tree very carefully. After some time the girl came out of the tree. The villagers were surprised. They thought that she was a goddess and took her to their king. The king was really impressed by the beauty of the girl and took her as his queen. The girl forgot everything and began to live happily there.

When the tiger came to his cave he did not find the girl there. The tiger knew some *mantra* and with his magic mantra he soon found out that the girl had become a queen and was in the king's palace. So he decided to go there. He turned into a bangle seller, went to the palace and called out, 'Bangles ! Bangles for sale!'

The queen came out with her maids. The tiger recognized her and asked her to show him her hand so that he could put the bangle around her wrist. While putting on the bangles, the tiger's nails hurt the girl's hand. He said to the girl, 'I will see you in the night.' Then he got up and called out again, 'Bangles, bangles for sale!'

The girl went to the king and told him everything. Night fell. While the queen slept, the king kept a sticky *lak* doll on the bed, spread a sheet of cloth over it and hid nearby. The tiger came in quietly through the window as a bangle seller, and transformed himself into a tiger. Then he pounced onto the bed. The king removed his sword and slashed the tiger's head with it. The obstacle was done away with and the king and the queen lived happily ever after.



The Story of the Iguana

In a certain village there lived an old couple. They had no children. Although the woman was old, she would top the young girls in cheering and enthusing all at the time of festivals. When the drums beat at the *Pausa* or at the *Nuakhai* festival, you wouldn't find the old woman at work. She would be on the streets with a bunch of peacock feathers. She would lead the dancers as young boys and girls joined the dancing, holding one another's hands.

The *Chaitra* festival was on. The villagers were celebrating *chaitra parab*. They felt that they ought to taste the new raw mangoes. The old woman got up in the morning and said to her husband, 'Eh, Listen, I am decorating the house. You should go and get some raw mangoes.'

The old man went to the grove and looked for mangoes here and there. He began to climb a tree. When he had climbed it halfway, he caught hold of a branch to bring it down. But when he tried to bring the branch down, it again sprang up. He tried with all his force but could not bring the branch down. He wondered, 'What might be the problem? Is somebody pulling the branch up?' Thus thinking, he looked up and found that what he had thought to be a branch was actually not a branch but the tail of an iguana.

The old man forgot about plucking mangoes and pulled at the iguana's tail. But when he applied more force, he fell down, holding the tail. He was really happy. The iguana wanted to escape but the old man did not want to let go of it. He finally killed the iguana by



thrashing it on the ground and took it home.

When he was about to reach home, the old man hid the iguana in a bush. When he reached home, the old woman asked him, 'Where are the mangoes?' The old man did not say anything. He stood like a statue without an answer. His wife shouted at him. Then the old man went to the bush. He brought the iguana, put it before his wife and said, 'Will you shout at me any more?' The old woman was very happy to see the iguana. Her mouth watered. She did not say anything to her husband and cooked the meat of the iguana. The old man and the woman had a good dinner and danced in the night. The old woman forgot about eating mangoes.

The next day the old man asked his wife, 'Shall I now go and get some mangoes?' The old woman answered, 'Yes, you may go to fetch mangoes but when you come back get an iguana.'



The Story of the Goat and the Tiger

In a certain village, there lived an old couple. They had a she-goat. They took care of her as their daughter. One day during the *Chaitra* festival the old woman kept some rice in a corner of her house. The goat ate the rice.

When the old woman came back she did not find any rice. She knew that it was the handiwork of the goat. Out of anger, she took a ladle and thrashed the goat with it. The goat ran away with fear. The old woman followed it. The goat felt insecure and so she ran towards the jungle leaving behind the old couple's house.

The old woman followed her for some distance calling out to her to come back. But the goat did not listen to the old woman's calls. The goat ran and ran. Finally, the old woman remarked, 'All right, go wherever you want, but come back home.'

When the goat reached the forest it was already evening. She saw a tigress approaching her. She began to tremble in fear. The tigress came near her and asked, 'Where are you going, my niece?' The goat felt some relief when she heard this question. She said, 'Dear aunt, my parents beat me. So I have come here.' The tigress said, 'Dear niece, you come from a village. How will you know how to live in the jungle? If someone finds you alone s/he will cut your throat. You can't even fight a jackal. I am quite old. I don't wish to harm you, or else I would not have spared you either. So if you want, safely go back home ignoring your ego and anger, or else you may lose your life here.' The goat said, 'I would rather die here than go back home.'



It is better to die than to suffer the blows of that old woman. I will never go back.' The tigress tried to persuade the goat to return home but the goat did not move. Then the tigress asked, 'Niece, you seem to be pregnant. Where will you go in this condition?' The goat said, 'I felt like having a handful of rice. So the old woman chased me out of the house ! Now you ask me to go back there again ! How can I do so? If you want to eat me, you may do so. But I won't go back to that house again.'

The tigress said, 'Listen, I too am pregnant like you. I will give birth to a cub after a couple of months. You will also give birth to a kid. Therefore, how can I eat you? I promise not to eat you. You can come and stay with me if you wish. Nobody in the forest will touch you.' The goat went reluctantly with the tigress. The tigress would sleep inside the cave and the goat would stay outside.

A few days later the tigress gave birth to three cubs and the goat to three kids. The tigress slept inside with her cubs and the goat would sleep outside with her kids.

The kids were tender and active. Plenty of leaves and grass were available in the forest. The kids ate the leaves and grass and grew fast. The tigress couldn't resist looking at these kids. But she had given her word. How would she eat them openly ? So she thought up a plan to eat the kids.

One day the tigress said to one of the kids, 'Son, why do all of you bother your mother by sleeping near her? You can sleep with me inside the cave tonight.' The kids could not understand the motive of the tigress but their mother understood her cunningness. She said to her kids, 'Yes, you may go inside the cave but be careful.' The kid merely laughed at his mother and went inside the cave to sleep with the tigress.

Inside the cave the tigress' cubs were also sleeping. As the kid came inside, the tigress asked them to move up a little. Later, the kid moved near to the tigress' belly and slept there. Meanwhile, the tiger's cub moved away from near her mother's belly and slept in the kid's place. The tigress got up in the middle of the night and taking her



son to be the kid, ate him. In the morning she saw the bones of her son. She realized what had happened and felt furious. She remarked, 'Wait ! I will kill you all.' The kid went to his mother and told her everything. They all became alert. The tigress called another one of the kid to come and sleep near her. Yet another kid went to her. The kid knew of the tigress' plan. So he did not sleep and in the middle of the night, got up and slowly moved away. Later, the tigress woke up to eat the kid. She found somebody sleeping near her belly. So she ate him. In the morning she found only one one cub sleeping near her. She realized that she had eaten her own cub at night.

She was enraged. She said, 'I will surely eat the kid to night.' Once again night fell. She called one kid to sleep near her. The third kid went inside the cave. The kid's siblings felt anxious. The kid was also worried. He did not fall sleep. He only pretended to be asleep. When he saw the tigress' eyes were close, he got up and came to his brothers and mother and told them everything. The tigress was asleep. They said, 'Let us go away from here. Or else she will kill all of us.'

The mother goat felt very happy and they all ran for life. Once again the tigress thought that the kid was sleeping near her belly and ate him only to realize later that it was her own cub. Angry, when she went outside, she found nobody there. Even the three kids were not to be seen. The tigress spent her days in sorrow.



How the Lame Man Got Cured

In a certain village there lived a young lame man. He had a few brothers. The brothers hated their lame brother and troubled him a lot. So the young lame man took his axe and went to the forest. On the way to the forest, he came across a stream. In the stream he lifted a big stone and found a crab under it. He caught the crab and walked ahead. In the forest he came to the cave of a tiger. He looked inside the cave very carefully. But he did not find a tiger inside the cave. So he went and sat near the cave.

It was already night. Soon the lame man started dozing. He heard the roaring sound of the tiger. He became alert. After sometime he saw the tiger coming with a sambar. Then the tiger sat with his back at the entrance of the cave. His forelegs and head remained outside the cave. The tiger started to eat the sambar's flesh. As the man saw the tiger eating, he felt hungry. What should he do? Then an idea came to his mind. He hurled the crab near the tiger's tail. The crab was already angry. It caught hold of the tiger's tail. The tiger felt afraid that his tail would be bitten away. So he left the sambar and started to run. When it saw the tiger run, the crab caught hold of the tiger's tail very tight with the intention of making him fall. After the tiger had left, the man came out of the cave. He saw the sambar and desired to eat its meat. So he lit a fire. Then he cut the sambar's body with his axe, roasted its meat and ate happily.

Morning dawned. He decided to preserve the remaining meat and eat it later. Only the stomach of the sambar remained. The young



man put this last portion into the fire and sat near it. After some time the stomach of the sambar burst with a loud noise and scattered all around.

The lame man was sitting absent-mindedly. When he heard the noise he was shocked for a moment and ran in fear. After sometime he sat down and examined his leg. He found that his leg was now alright. His joy knew no bounds. He started to sing,

The sambar's stomach burst...burst

The lame young man started to walk again.



The Blind Man and the Hunchback

In a particular village there lived a blind man and a hunchback. They were great friends. Their friendship was sanctified with a ritual. So they were *mahaprasad*. They both did not have any land. Hence they took to thieving. They would go to different places to steal. Once they went to a field to steal crops. The hunchback asked his friend, 'What portion of the crop will you take ? The fruits or the roots?' The blind man couldn't see. So he said, 'I will take the roots.' The hunchback cut the root end of the paddy plant and gave it to the blind man. The blind man took the roots and gave them to his mother. His mother said, 'You fool! The grains grow on the upper portion of the crop. You have received only the straw!' The blind man thought, 'Next time I should teach the hunchback a lesson.'

The next day they went to steal sugarcane. The hunchman asked the blind man, 'Which portion will you take – the upper end or the root end?' The blind man was clever. He said, 'I will take the upper portion.' Then the hunchback gave him the top portion of the sugarcane leaves. The blind man took them home. His mother said, 'What will you do with these? These are useless.'

On another day they went to steal cows from the landlord's cowshed. They reached the cowshed. It was dark. A tiger was inside the shed but they did not know about it. Before they entered the shed the hunchback asked his friend, 'Which portion will you take?' The blind man had no idea about cows. So he said, 'I will take the back portion.' The hunchback was happy. He thought, 'I will give away



the cow's tail and take the cow for myself.' Then he asked the blind man to remain outside and went inside the shed. By mistake in the dark, he held the tiger's tail and said to the blind man, 'I am holding the cow's head, you hold its back and cut it off.' The blind man went inside the cave. The tiger thought, 'These people were talking about cutting their own back end. They must be dangerous people. So I must make my escape.' Thus he fled from that place. As the tiger left with a roar, the landlord's servant rushed in and saw the blind man and hunchback inside the cowshed. He beat them badly. Since then the blind man and the hunchback gave up stealing.



The Proud Old Man

In a certain village there lived an old couple. They did not have any land. They cleared the forest, grew crops there and earned their living.

Once the old man said, 'I will clear the forest and sow flower seeds.' On hearing the old man, his wife got annoyed and said, 'You have grown old enough. What is the use of growing flowers at this age? Whom are you going to give these flowers to? Forget about all that. Instead, think of sowing gram, cucumber, pumpkin, and so on. We can eat these. Of what use would be the flowers?' But the old man did not like his wife's idea. Instead, he got angry with her. He said to the old woman, 'Well, you do whatever you wish to do on this forest land. I shall look for another field and cultivate flowers there.'

The old woman sowed gram, pumpkin and cucumber in the old field. The old man cleared another patch of land and there he sowed flower seeds. There was no rain that year. So the old man's plants dried up. The old woman's yield too was not good. Some of it was eaten up by wild animals. But she was still able to get some yield.

The old man felt very angry for his plants had died. The old woman was no less. She did not share her yield with her husband. She alone ate the vegetables she had grown. The old man did not say anything. He managed with the wages he received by working for others.

One day the old man said, 'Come, we will go to catch crabs.' The old woman thought, 'I have some grains. If I get a few crabs they will make very good curry.' So she said, 'Yes, let us go.'



The old man and women went together to catch crabs. As they were looking around the old man came upon a big crab under a stone. He said, 'Look, I cannot go beneath the stone. You should go near the crab.' As the old woman went beneath the stone, the old man placed a big stone at the entrance. The old woman could not come out as the stone was too heavy to push aside. She died.

The old man heaved a sigh of relief on the old woman's death. But he was scared of the villagers. For what would he say if they asked him about the old woman? He went and sat under a tree. There was a langur sitting on the branch of the tree, observing the old man. He saw the old man sitting still under the tree. The langur shook the old man and asked, 'Friend, what has happened? Why do you seem so worried?' The old man came to his senses. He said, 'Why am I worried, friend? My wife has gone to her parents' house. I have no son or daughter. There is plenty to eat at home. I was wondering who would eat all the food?'

The langur said, 'Friend, if you have rice, then how long does it take to get the crows? If you have food you will have no want of people. I will come with you and help you if you want.' The old man said, 'Friend, you can come but if the villagers ask, please say that my wife has gone to her parents' house.' The langur said, 'Oh that I will certainly do. Let us go.'

They started towards the old man's village. The villagers had seen the old man and his wife going towards the stream in the morning. So when they found the old man coming back alone with the monkey, they enquired about his wife. The old man told them that she had gone to her parents' house. If someone did not believe him, he presented the langur as a witness. In the old man's house the monkey fed on a bellyfull of grains. He said, 'Friend, you have helped me so much. Now tell me what I could do for you.' The old man asked the monkey to get some sweet potatoes and fruits from the forest. The langur got these for the old man. The old man thought that the langur would get something from the jungle everyday and in return the old man would give it something to eat every day.



One day when the langur was coming to see the old man, he met a tiger on the way. The tiger asked the langur, 'Friend, where are you going?' The langur was a bit surprised. How come the tiger had addressed him as a friend? The langur replied, 'I have a friend in the village. So I am going to see him.'

When the tiger heard about a man, he thought of making friends with him. He said to the monkey, 'I would also like to come with you to meet this man. I have had a desire to be friend with a man since long. If you agree I would like to come with you.' The monkey said, 'Yes, you can of course come to have friendship with that man. But when the villagers see you they will certainly kill you and me as well. So I will not take you during daytime, but you can come with me at night to be friends with the man.'

The langur went and told the old man that the tiger would come to make friendship with him. The man felt afraid. Then the monkey went back to the jungle. But the old man could not sleep. He was worried because he had killed his wife. In addition, the thought of the tiger had doubled his worry.

The old man thought that if he continued to live in the village the villagers might kill him when they learnt that he had killed his wife. The tiger could come and eat him. So he decided to leave the village and go away.

The old man left the village and went to the river. It had rained during the night. The river was flooded. The old man entered the river water. The current was very strong. The old man tried to swim across the river but could not reach the river bank. He drowned in the river. The next day the villagers found the body of the old man in the stream. They also found the dead body of the old woman and realised that the old man had killed his wife.



The Chicken Meat is Very Tasty

In a particular village there lived a young Paraja man. He earned his living by working in the fields of his landlord. He would receive some money from his landlord. He was very happy. One day he went to the market and bought sweets and cakes. He also bought some liquor to drink. On his way back he saw somebody selling eggs. The young man bought an egg and returned home.

When he reached home he put the egg in an earthen pot and hung the pot from the ceiling. Then he went to sleep. He thought, 'I have got the egg. I shall put the egg with other eggs in somebody's house, so it will hatch and a chicken will be born. Then the chicken will grow into a hen and the hen will give a lot of eggs. Those eggs will then produce hens. I shall sell those hens and become a landlord. I will employ workers. When any worker will not do his work, I shall kick him like this.' So the young man kicked the pot. The pot fell down and the egg broke. And thus the Paraja's dream was shattered.





Gadaba Folktales





The Old Crab Couple

One day a crab and his wife came out of their hole to visit their friend. A crow saw them leaving and tried to grab them. The crab and his wife became alert and cursed the crow, 'Let your wings be broken.' And indeed, the crow fell down and crushed its wings.

The old crab couple moved ahead. They saw a black cow rushing towards them. They had a narrow escape. They cursed the cow, 'Let your horns be broken.' And indeed, the cow broke its horns and went elsewhere.

The crabs moved further. On the way they came across a pipal tree. As the tree saw the couple it started fluttering its leaves. The crab couple got angry and cursed the pipal tree saying, 'Let all leaves shed from your branches.' And indeed, the leaves of the tree blew away.

The crab couple moved ahead. As they were walking, a bird from the Saraswati pond relieved itself while flying over them. The crab couple became angry and said, 'O you bird from the Saraswati pond! Let the pond dry up.' And indeed, the Saraswati pond dried up.

As the crab couple went along, they came across a field. Seven brothers were ploughing the field. The crab couple thought that if they went across the field, they would be crushed by the brothers. So they cursed them, 'Seven peacocks dwell in the nest of the hen. All you seven brothers will keep doing the *dhimsa* dance.' The seven brothers left their ploughs and holding one another's hands, began the *dhimsa* dance in a circle. As they were dancing, their father came



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to see if they were ploughing the fields. When the crab couple saw the man they cursed him, 'You will sit and stand, again and again as a punishment.'

The old man sat down and stood up several times. Then the milk woman came and asked for some gruel. The crab couple cursed her as well and she died on the spot. Then the crab couple moved on.



The Pumpkin Creeper

There lived an old couple in a particular village. They had no belonging of their own and were very poor. They led a difficult life. They thought that if they went and worked in the landlord's house they would get something to eat in return. So they went to the thrashing ground of the kind to separate the husk from the grains. But they did not get any grain. Instead, they got a pumpkin seed from the husk. They went home with the seed.

The old man planted the seed in his backyard and watered it regularly. After three or four days the seed sprouted. Slowly it grew into a creeper, spread around and bore flowers. Then after a few days a lot of pumpkins were to be seen on the creeper. The old couple was very happy. One day the old man said to his wife, 'Why don't you pluck a pumpkin and prepare curry out of it?' The old woman agreed. She plucked a raw pumpkin and prepared pumpkin curry. The old man tasted the curry and said, 'Oh! What bitter curry!' The old woman asked, 'Bitter?' The old man said, 'If you do not believe me, taste it yourself.' The old woman said, 'Why should I eat the bitter stuff. You wanted to have pumpkin curry. You can eat all the curry.' So saying she gave all the curry to the old man. The old man ate it all. Thus the old woman would cook a pumpkin everyday and give it to the old man who would eat it happily.

One day the old woman thought, 'If the pumpkins were so bitter, the old man wouldn't have eaten them regularly.' So she tasted the



curry. Oh! What a wonderful taste it had! The old woman tasted the curry again and again till she had finished it all.

When old man came and saw his wife licking the cooking pan. He asked, 'Hey, what are you doing?' The old woman said, 'I am eating the pumpkin curry.' The old man was angry and saw that there was left nothing in the pan. He got furious and snatched the pan from the old woman and broke it on her head.



The Old Childless Couple

In a certain village there lived an old couple. They had no children. They were very unhappy. The villagers looked at them with contempt as they were childless. They had consulted medicine men and priests. They had also taken many kinds of medicines. Still they had no children.

One day the old couple decided to perform a ritual. They put a small wooden toy in a basket and started for another village. As they walked, the Sun God was about to set. The old couple was still walking when the Sun God rose the following morning. The Sun God watched them closely. After all he was their God. The Sun God said to his wife, 'Listen! The old couple are very sad because they don't have any children. I have been watching them for a long time. I can no longer bear to see their sorrow. They are quite old and have no strength. Still they are climbing hills hoping for a child at this age. They will be walking even after I set. Then it will be night. The wild animals will wander out and may attack them. I think we should do something to help them.' The wife of the Sun God replied, 'Yes, we ought to do something to resolve their problem. But what can we do?'

The Sun God said, 'Look, we have two sons. We shall send one of them to earth. He will come back to us after a few years.' His wife said, 'Alright, when you come back home we will decide whom to send.'

The Sun God descended and went home. The Sun God and his



wife called both their sons and asked who among them would like to go to earth. Both their sons declined. After a lot of persuasion the elder son agreed. Then his mother gave him the head of a brinjal and said, 'My boy, keep the head of the brinjal with you. After you complete fifteen years on earth, you will go to the forest in search of firewood. When you return to the old couple's house from the forest, you will eat the the brinjal's head and die. Then you will come back here again.' Their son agreed to the plan and went to earth with the head of the brinjal.

It was already dark. Still the old couple walked with their basket. Suddenly, they found a baby crying in the basket. When they put down the basket they found that there lay a baby in place of the wooden toy. They were very happy. They decided to go back home. The next day they reached their village. The villagers were surprised to see the old couple with a baby.

Soon the boy was fifteen years old. On the day he was fifteen, he took an axe and went to the forest. In the forest he cut one of his legs. The old couple saw a lot of blood flowing from the wound. They went to get medicine from the village doctor. In the meanwhile the boy ate the head of the brinjal and died.

When the old couple came back the boy was dead. They wept profusely. But dead men can't return. The old couple became childless again!



Chandana Kathia Raja

In a certain village, there lived an old man. His wife was dead. He had a daughter. The old man wanted to marry again. So he took some money and gold and went out to find a wife. As the old man was going a she-bear saw him and asked, 'Where are you going, old man?' The old man replied, 'I am going to look for a wife.' The she-bear said, 'Why are you going so far? If you want to marry me I am ready to marry you. There is nobody else at my home. So you need not pay any bride price.' The old man thought, 'Though the bear is not very good looking, she is not asking for any bride price. So it is not a bad idea to marry her. That way I will save some money. And she is also not that old. She can earn and bring home her wages and I can enjoy life sitting at home.' With this thought the old man took the she-bear home as his wife.

But after a few days things turned out to be quite different from what the old man had thought. The she-bear ill-treated her step daughter. She would abuse the old man's daughter for no reason. The daughter initially put up with her step-mother's misbehaviour. After a few days the she-bear gave birth to a girl. The girl grew up and now both mother and daughter began to ill-treat the old man's daughter.

One day the king of that country, Chandana Kathia came hunting. The she-bear's daughter laid thorns on the way of the king's horse in order to kill him. As King Chandana Kathia passed by that way, his horse stepped on the thorns and hurt itself. The king fell. At



that time the old man's first daughter had gone to get water from the stream. She saw the king on her way and helped him and took care of him. Then the king went to his camp and the girl went to get water. On the way she heard a vulture and his wife talking. The vulture said, 'You know, King Chandana Kathia who fell on the poisonous thorns will not survive. But there is a way to make him live.' The she-vulture asked, 'Tell me the way.' The vulture told her the remedy. The old man's first daughter listened to this very carefully, disguised herself as a young man and went to the king's camp. The king and his horse were in a critical condition. The girl had all the medicines with her. She introduced herself as a medicine man to the king's guard and went inside. Then she gave the medicines to the king and his horse. They were both cured. The king took out a ring and gave it to the girl who was disguised as a medicine man. The girl went back home with the ring.

When the she-bear and her daughter saw the girl wearing the ring, they asked her from where she had got it. The old man's first daughter said, 'Chandana Kathia King has given this ring to me.' The she-bear and her daughter did not believe her and started ill-treating her again. The girl said, 'You will see, he will now take me as his wife.'

One day the girl found it difficult to put up with the ill-treatment. She went to the king and said, 'Oh King, you had given me this ring. Please marry me.' The king said, 'I did not give this ring to you. I gave it to the medicine man who cured me.' The girl said, 'I came in disguise as a medicine man and cured you.' Then the girl explained everything to the king, beginning from how her sister had laid thorns for his horse and how she had cured him. She also told the king how her step-mother and half-sister had been ill-treating her. The king listened to everything and made her his queen and sent his men to kill the girl's step mother and half-sister.



The Ear-cutter Jackal

One day a jackal was hurrying along the forest path. He looked quite worried. A bear met him and asked, 'O brother, jackal brother, where are you going in such a hurry?' The jackal said, 'The king has asked for me. I will meet him near the riverside. There is something urgent. When I get back, I will tell you all the details.' Then the jackal resumed his walk.

On the way he saw a wild boar. The boar asked him, 'Where are you going?' The jackal answered, 'The king has asked me to come and meet him on the riverside.' Then he moved ahead. Next, he met a tiger. Then he met a *sambar*. The jackal told all whom he met that he was going to meet the king on the riverside as he has been asked to do so by the king.

However, instead of going to the stream, the jackal went to the market. He searched for a pair of scissors and a mirror and returned to the forest. He sat under a tree and cut his ear. Then he started to walk through the forest to go back home. On the way the boar asked him, 'What news do you have from the king?' The jackal said, 'It is terrible. The king's people will come to hunt in our forest. But they will not kill the animals of our forest who belong here. However, they will certainly kill the ones who have come here from other forests.' The wild boar became worried. He asked, 'But how will they distinguish animals who originally belong to this forest and animals who are from other forests?'

The jackal said, 'An arrangement has been made. See, they have given me this mirror and a pair of scissors and asked me to mark the



animals of this forest by cutting one ear of each animal. Look, an ear of mine has also been cut.'

The boar replied hurriedly, 'If there is no sign, I may be in danger. Please show me the mirror and cut one of my ears. If you cut my nose instead of my ear, I will die. I can't trust you.'

The jackal was waiting for this moment. He immediately made the boar hold the mirror and cut his ear. The boar's face looked ugly. So he ran away into the forest. Then the jackal happily ate the boar's ear. It was really tasty to eat the boar's tender ear. Then the jackal moved along and told all animals the same story. Everyone requested him to cut one of their ears. The jackal cut many ears and ate them and also took some for his wife and children.



The Greedy Old Woman

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had a number of chicken. The old woman was very miserly. Whenever her husband asked her for chicken curry, she would refuse. The old man thought of a plan. He did not ask his wife to cook chicken curry any more. Instead, the old man disguised himself as a young man, went to the old woman's house and said awful things about her own husband. Initially, the old woman did not say anything but as it was getting dark, she felt attracted towards the young man and started narrating her husband's dreadful habits to the young man in disguise. But the disguised young man did not bother about all that she said. He saw that the old woman was attracted to him and was encouraging his advances. Thus they began to meet every evening. The disguised young man would say, 'I am hungry and I want to eat chicken.' The old woman would cook chicken and the disguised young man would eat happily.

Thus the disguised young man ate several chickens. After a few days the old woman lost interest in her husband. She began to wonder how she could flee with this young man. One day she said to the young man in disguise, 'Listen, I am not interested in my old man anymore. If you take me along, I shall run away with you. Then we can solemnize our marriage.' The young man became worried. He said, 'I shall come here tomorrow evening. You should remain ready. We shall run away.' Then the old man removed his disguise and came back to his house. The old woman started behaving well with



him. The old man could understand her motive. It was already morning. The old man stayed at home till evening. The old woman wondered how she could send him out so that she could flee with the young man. The old man said that he was going to the pond and went away. The old woman was very happy. As soon as he left, the old woman wore beautiful clothes and waited for her young fiancée.

The old man came back in the disguise of the young man. The old woman served him chicken curry and rice. The old man ate to his fill and said, 'Shouldn't we start?' The old woman was waiting for this moment. She joined him immediately.

The young man and the old woman started walking. The old woman could not see things in the dark. Slowly, it was light. She turned to look at the young man and saw her husband. There was no young boy, but her husband, the same old man! She shouted at him, 'You scoundrel! You did all this to eat chicken! Go away, I do not wish to see your face again. I will go back to my parents' house.'

The old man tried to convince her but she did not listen and went to her parents' house.



Jaga Potter

There lived a potter named Jaga in a particular village. He had twelve wives. He would get twelve carts of clay and eat twelve kilos of cooked rice at a time. He built twelve huts for all his twelve wives. However, his wives did not like him. The potter felt angry with the behaviour of his wives. So he left home and went away elsewhere.

He met a man on the way. The man was walking alone, carrying two bundles. Jaga felt impressed and wanted to make the man his friend. So Jaga said to the man, 'You are indeed a strong man. Where are you going, carrying these bundles?' The man said, 'My wives ill-treated me. So I got angry and am going away, leaving them behind.' Jaga said, 'Then we are in the same boat. So let us become friends and solemnize our friendship with a ritual.' Thus they became *mahaprasad* and moved ahead.

As they went along, they saw a cowherd. When the cowherd saw the two men he felt scared. He spread his towel, bundled all his cows and buffaloes and began to run. The two friends were surprised by the strength of the cowherd. They went near the cowherd and befriended him. They asked, 'You are so strong, why are you working in this jungle?' The cowherd replied, 'My wife does not treat me well. So I have left my house.' Hearing him, they shared their experiences and asked him to join them. And the three men moved out together.

As they went along they came across a river. They were contemplating as to how they would cross the river when a fisherman



said, 'Why are you so worried?' The three men said, 'We are thinking how we can cross this river.' The fisherman said to them, 'You are worried about a small matter. Come, sit on my back and I will take you to the opposite bank of the river.' The three men sat on the fisherman's back. The fisherman began to swim across the river. As he was swimming, the fisherman caught the tail of a large fish. The fish reached him to the other bank and jumped onto the bank and died.

The three friends and the fisherman reached the bank. They saw that the fish was as big as a horse. They had never seen such a big fish in their lives. The three friends were amazed to see the strength of the fisherman and asked him why he was hanging around the river bank in spite of having so much strength. The fisherman told them that his wife misbehaved with him. So he preferred to stay out of the house all day and night. The three friends made the fisherman their friend and the four men walked ahead.

As they moved on, they came across a house. A young ghost lived in the house. The ghost had dug a well in front of her house and covered it with a plank. When anyone approached the house, the ghost would call out in a very tender voice. When the person tried to go near the ghost by stepping on the plank he would fall in the well and meet his end. Then the ghost would take out the body and eat it. When the four friends came near the ghost's house, they called out aloud. The ghost came and asked them, 'What do you want, boys?' The four friends said, 'Oh we just wanted some fire.' She said, 'Well, you can take the fire but why don't you come and sit down. You must be tired.' The friends were not aware of the ghost's trap. Jaga stepped off the plank and fell inside the well. The three other friends saw this. They realized that the woman must be a ghost or an evil spirit. So they fought against her. One friend threw his mast at the ghost. The ghost collapsed. She felt miserable from the blow of the mast. Then the cowherd threw his bundle at the ghost. The ghost died. But before she died she said to the friends, 'You have killed me. But my seven sons have gone to the market. They will kill you when they



come back.’ Then the friends went inside the ghost’s house. They found a young girl inside. She said that she was the ghost’s daughter. The four friends waited for the ghost’s seven sons to come back from the forest. As soon as they returned home the four friends killed all the seven sons and began to live in the house.

The fisherman got fish from the river. The cowherd got milk, the potter sold pots and the ploughman cultivated land. Thus the four friends led a happy life. However, all the four friends wanted to marry the girl. But nobody said this to the other as each one knew that if he revealed his wish the other three friends would oppose the idea as they too wanted to marry her.

One day the young girl went to bathe in the river. She washed her hair. A few strands of her hair broke and flowed into the water. At that moment the king of the region who had come hunting with his party was drinking water from the stream. As he gathered water, the girl’s hair floated onto his palms. The king noticed that the hair was twelve feet long. He said, ‘I wish to marry the girl whose hair I have’. So he sent his ministers and attendants to find the girl.

The king’s soldiers went in search of the girl. They reached the house where the four friends resided. The girl was sweeping the courtyard and her hair was touching the ground. The soldiers were certain that she was the girl they were looking for. They asked her who else lived in the house. The girl called the four friends. They came and asked what the matter was. The soldiers explained that the king had sent them to bring the girl. The four friends discussed the matter and said, ‘We agree with you. The king of course cannot come here. So let him send three girls, two old women and a priest to take his bride after five days.’ The soldiers went and said this to the king. Accordingly, the king sent three girls, two old women and a priest along with the soldiers to accompany the girl.

When the king’s men reached the place, the four friends were smoking *pikas* outside the house. They were unaware about the well covered by a plank. The friends called the king’s soldiers. When the soldiers tried to go inside the house they fell into the well. The friends



killed the two old women and asked the priest to perform their marriage with the three girls sent by the king and of Jaga potter with the ghost's daughter. The priest performed the ritual in fear. Then they killed the priest and lived happily with their wives. The king sent his men in search of them but could not find them.



The Jackal and the Dog

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They were childless. But they had a pet dog. They loved the dog as their son. The dog would guard the house when they were away in the forest and fields for work.

One day the old man and his wife left for the jungle early in the morning. The dog was at home. He felt hungry at noon time. He searched for food all around the house but did not find anything to eat. Finally, he saw something near the hearth. He found a bowl of rice. He was very hungry. So he finished the entire bowl of rice at once and sat near the gate. When it was evening the old couple returned from the forest. He went to them, waved his tail and licked their legs to seek appreciation. The old man had just had a wash and asked his wife to serve him some food. The old woman went near the hearth to get the rice she had kept in the bowl. But she found the bowl empty. The old woman thought that the dog must have eaten it. She felt angry. So she took the broom and thrashed the dog. For a moment, her husband could not follow what was happening. When he came to know about it, he too started beating the dog with his stick. The dog stayed there for sometime, but later decided to leave the house as the shame and insult was too much for him to put up with. So he ran to the forest.

On his way the dog came across a she-jackal. The jackal asked him, 'Where are you going in the night?' The dog said, 'I don't know. But I am going away, I will go somewhere. Who is there for me? I



am not bothered about anything. The old couple loved me but because I ate some rice they chased me away. Now I know that everyone is merciless. Nobody understands the sorrow of others. They do not understand the circumstances that have made someone commit a mistake. Without understanding the situation they chased me out of their home. So I don't trust anyone in this world any longer. I will go to the forest. If I am attacked by a tiger or a fox, I will die.' The she-jackal could understand the dog's sorrow and said, 'Didn't you know about the world before? The world as such is like this. So there is nothing to worry about. Whatever has happened has happened. Now listen to me. Don't go any further at night. Come, we will go to my house. When you are feeling better tomorrow morning, you can decide to go wherever you want.' Initially, the dog refused but finally agreed to go with the jackal. The jackal fed him and let him sleep.

The next morning when the dog got up, his hurt and pain had abated. The she-jackal came near him and they talked about their lives. Then the dog said to her, 'Look, you have nobody with you. I too have no one. Let us get married.'

The she-jackal agreed and they began to live as husband and wife. They both worked and earned their living. One day, when the dog and the jackal were going for their daily wage work, they saw a baby lying on the way. The baby was crying. The dog and the she-jackal felt worried to see the baby in the jungle. They discussed if they should take the baby with them. But they first wanted to ascertain if somebody had left the baby and would return to take it. But nobody came to take the baby. So they took the baby home. They took care of the baby with much love and affection. The baby grew up slowly into a beautiful girl. They thought, 'We are a dog and a jackal. But this is a human child. If she stays with us nobody will marry her. So let us leave her with a human family.'

The she-jackal had earned some money by way of wages. She took her savings to the market and bought a sari, bangles and ornaments and gave them to her daughter to wear. The girl looked



beautiful after wearing these. The jackal said, 'Our daughter looks like a princess. Only she does not have ornaments of gold and silver. Otherwise she would look like a princess.' The dog said, 'From where shall we get gold and silver to make her look like a princess?' The jackal said, 'You need not worry. I shall go to the market and get them all.' The dog said, 'Don't do such foolish things. I have lived among men but you have always lived in the forest. If you are seen in the market people will chase and kill you. So whatever you wish to do, think over it twice and only then do it.' The jackal said, 'I told you once. Don't worry about anything. I will get the gold ornaments and I am quite sure about it.'

The next day, in spite of the dog's warnings, the jackal went to the market. The jackal saw the princess coming behind her wearing a lot of ornaments, so many of them that her neck bent with the heavy weight. The jackal sat and waited for her to come nearer and asked, 'Who are you?' The princess replied, 'I am the king's daughter.' The jackal said, 'You look so beautiful. You have put on so many ornaments. That is the reason for your beauty.' The girl felt hurt as she thought that the jackal meant that she looked beautiful because of the ornaments. So she said irritably, 'Why? If I take off all these ornaments, won't I look good?' The jackal said, 'I don't know, I feel that it is the ornaments that make you look beautiful.' The princess was furious. She threw off all the ornaments and asked the jackal, 'Now, don't I look good without these ornaments?' The jackal said, 'You look so beautiful without these ornaments. Why do you need to put on all these heavy things?' The princess said, 'You take them. I won't wear these any more.' The jackal was looking forward to this moment. So she hurriedly gathered all the ornaments, put them in a bundle and went back home. The princess went to the market.

When the jackal's daughter wore all the ornaments, she looked even more beautiful than the princess. The dog was away at that time. When he came back and saw so many ornaments, he asked the jackal, 'From where did you get all these?' The jackal replied that she had got them all from the princess. The dog and the jackal



suggested that they leave their daughter in a human habitat. But their daughter did not agree with the proposal. When they asked her whether she would prefer to marry a dog or jackal, she said 'yes'. So they made her wear the ornaments and took the girl along with them.

On the way, they came across the king's orchard. There they asked the girl to climb a tree and sit on a branch. They said, 'You remain seated here. Let's see what's there in our fate.' Then they left with a heavy heart. After they left, their daughter wept ceaselessly. Drops of her tears fell on the ground. At that moment the prince came to the orchard for a walk. He came and stood under the tree on which the girl was sitting. A drop of tear fell on him. The prince looked up and saw the girl. Then he asked her to come down. He thought that she might be a princess. The girl was shy. She did not want to come down the tree. The prince did not insist any more. He went to his palace and sent his men to bring the girl to the palace.

The king's men went and brought the girl to the palace. But the girl did not respond. She kept quiet. She thought, 'This is a prince. He likes me because of my beauty. When he will come to know that I am the daughter of a jackal or a dog, he will not spare me.' The prince tried to convince her and said, 'I will not ask you who you are or from where you have come. Forget all your fears and marry me. I assure you.' Thus the girl agreed to marry him.

They got married and led a happy life. The dog and the jackal came once to see if the prince had married their daughter. When they came to know that they were both married, they were very happy and heaved a sigh of relief. It had been a long time since the prince and the girl were married. One day the dog said to the jackal, 'Listen, we haven't seen our daughter for a long time. I would like to go and see the girl.' The jackal said, 'Yes, let us go and see her and come back. You will feel better.' Then the dog went to see his daughter.

After walking a long distance, the dog reached the palace. The girl was sweeping the floor. The dog called, 'My dear daughter!' The girl saw that her father was calling her. She was not happy to see her



father there. She realized that she had a problem but she did not want to displease him. So she pretended to be happy. She called the dog home and served him rice and curry. She had only one thing in mind. She thought that if the prince came to know of her father he would kill her. She thought for a moment and said, 'Father, you and my mother have brought me up. I am a queen now because of all your care and sacrifice. All this is true. But if my husband comes back from the jungle after his day's work, do you think he will spare me? Tell me. I am not asking you to go away. You have come from such a long distance. I am only telling you that you sleep on the verandah and I shall cover you with a basket. Lie there and do not make any noise. You can go back tomorrow morning.'

The dog said, 'Listen girl. Your husband can't make out that I am your father even if he sees me. We are after all dogs. We live with human beings. If he sees me, he will think that a dog has come from somewhere. And he won't know more than that. But if you feel so scared, you can cover me with a basket. I will sleep there and go back home tomorrow morning.' Then the girl asked him to lay down near the corner of the verandah where the chickens stayed during the night and covered him with a basket.

It was noon time. The prince came back from the forest and after having asked his wife to serve him food, sat down on the verandah. He was tired and sweating profusely. The dog knew that his son-in-law was back. He was eager to have a look at his son-in-law. He could not resist the temptation. So he came out of the basket and sat near his son-in-law. Then he started licking his feet and wagged his tail as the prince patted on his back.

The prince asked his wife, 'From where has this dog come?' She said, 'I don't know from where he has come. But it has been here since morning. He is not going away in spite of my efforts to drive him away. Give him a thrashing or he won't move.' The prince said, 'No, no, why should I beat him? He is a nice dog. He hasn't done any harm to us. Listen, we will keep him at home and give him a roasted hen to eat. Then he can go home in the morning. When you



serve me rice and curry for lunch do serve the dog as well.'

The dog's joy knew no bounds. He was all praises for his son-in-law. Then the girl served food to her husband in vessels but served her father in a broken piece of earthen pot. The prince and the dog had their food and took rest. In the night, they offered a roasted chicken to the dog and the following morning, the dog went back home.

Several days after the dog had visited his daughter and son-in-law, the jackal said, 'You went and saw our daughter and son-in-law. Now, I will go and visit them.' The dog said, 'See, I can mingle with human beings. So nobody could make out who I am. If you go there, they will kill you suspecting that you will eat their fowls. How will you go there? Even if you go, our son-in-law will not spare you.' But the jackal insisted that she would go to visit her daughter and son-in-law. After all she was a mother. She said, 'Even if I die, I will go and see my daughter and son-in-law.' The dog did not say a word more. The jackal reached her daughter and son-in-law's house with much difficulty, hiding herself whenever necessary. She called out to her daughter, 'Come girl, see who has come?' The girl did not pay any attention to her and asked, 'Just a few days back father had paid a visit and now you have come here. You will get me killed one day. If you want me to survive, you must go away from here.' The jackal said, 'I have come with much difficulty, just to have a look at my son-in-law and you ask me to go away immediately. Don't worry. Nobody will come to know. You should cover me with a basket. I will lie there quietly. When my son-in-law comes, I will slowly get out from under the basket and go away.' The girl did not say anything and put a basket over the jackal and went on to do her own work.

While she was working the girl thought, 'The prince will come back after some time. And if he sees the jackal here, he will certainly ask me from where the jackal has come. Why should I get into all this trouble? I shall thrash her and she will die. The problem will be over.' So she left her work, took a stick and went to the corner where the jackal lay. She gave several blows to the jackal. The jackal died



then and there. Where should she keep the dead body of the jackal? She put the dead body in a basket and kept it inside the house.

The prince came back home after the day's work. He had his food and asked his wife, 'There are baskets inside the house. Get me a basket. I need to take something.' The girl showed him one basket after another but the prince refused them all. At last when she brought out the basket in which the jackal's dead body lay, he finally said, 'Yes.' She gave the basket to the prince. The girl was in great panic. She thought, 'If the prince comes to know the truth, he will certainly kill me.' The prince opened the basket. To the daughter's surprise, there lay a jackal of gold, silver, pearl and diamond. The prince said to his wife, 'The various parts of the jackal have turned into different metals. I asked you several times about your parents. But you did not say anything about them. You must be the daughter of an extraordinary king. Or else, how can all of this come here? These are not ours. I want to know about your parents. We must go there today itself.' Hearing this, the girl was really worried. Who was there for her? Where should she take the prince to show her people? How could she take her husband to a dog and introduce him as her father? If she did so, would he keep her?

She said, 'If you say so, we will go.' Thus they both started. They went on and on. In the night they would cook, eat and rest. The next day they would start again.

After a few days they stopped near a pond. The prince was very exhausted. He had no strength to walk any more. He asked his wife, 'We have already spent seven days walking all the way. We are yet to reach your parents' house. How long will it take?' If she had her parents alive, she would have told him. To avoid his question she said, 'Just a few more days to go.' The prince asked the servants to take care of the girl and went towards the pond. The servants became busy with cooking. The girl was sitting alone. She heard a voice from a distance. The voice said, 'I was once a king, but got cursed and then I became a snake and got into the ant hill.' The girl thought, 'I will go and kick the ant hill. Then I will look inside. The snake is



inside the ant hill, so he will bite me and I will die and will be rid of all problems.’ So she went near the anthill. But as she kicked the ant hill an amazing thing happened. Suddenly, a big palace came up. There were many people there. Some people came with a palanquin and said, ‘Our daughter and son-in-law have come.’ They asked her, ‘Where is our son-in-law?’

Then the prince came. They made him sit in the palanquin and asked the girl to sit beside him. Then they took them inside. The prince said, ‘You belong to such a rich kingdom. But you never told me anything. I am nobody compared to your family. I am like your servant.’ The girl did not say anything but just remained thunderstuck. They stayed there for some days and then came back to their own place.



The Jaggery Cake

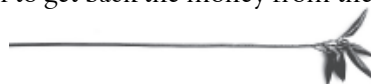
In a particular village there lived an old couple. They were gardeners and were very poor. The old woman prepared jaggery cakes and sold them in the market. They earned their living thus.

On her way to the market there was a huge banyan tree. The old woman would sit under the tree and rest for a while. One day a jackal came and asked her, 'Where are you going, grandma?' The old woman replied, 'Dear son, I am taking a few jaggery cakes to sell in the market.' The jackal said, 'Look, I work as a servant in the king's palace. I did not bring money with me as I was in a hurry. As you know one has to reach the palace in time or else there is severe punishment. After all it is a job in the palace. I am hungry but can't buy your cake. It's all right, I will manage somehow. I haven't got money now. I will have something once I reach the city.'

The old woman felt moved on hearing this. She said, 'My son. You work in the palace. You must be earning a lot of money. Take these cakes and have them. You can pay me later.' The jackal refused to take them at first, but later took the cakes, ate them and left.

This went on for a long time. The old woman was in great loss. Finally, she did not have enough money to run her business. One day her husband asked, 'Don't you get any profit now a days?' The old woman said, 'I do get profit but it is spent on a jackal. A jackal eats my jaggery cakes on credit everyday from me. He says he works in the king's palace. When I ask him for money, he says he hasn't got his salary.'

The old man thought of a plan to get back the money from the



jackal. He made a statue of the old woman with sticky cakes and made the statue sit under the banyan tree. He put some cakes in the tray and hid himself behind the banyan tree. After some time the jackal arrived. The jackal thought that it was the old woman sitting there. He started talking to the old woman, but did not get any response. He got irritated and caught hold of the old woman to shake her. He got stuck to the statue. He tried to free himself but could not do so.

Then the old man came out of his hiding place. He released the jackal from the statue, tied his legs and hands and took him to the king. The king's court was in session. The old man asked the king, 'Does this jackal work in your palace?' The king denied this and ordered his men to punish the jackal and to make him starve for a week. He said, 'Listen, don't beat him all the time. Beat him only in the morning and evening.' Then the king paid the old man the price of all the cakes and the old man returned home happily.

The jackal was beaten up regularly in the mornings and evenings. One day, he became really swollen. He looked fatter than before. Once he saw another jackal coming towards him. He called him and asked, 'Brother, where are you going?' The jackal said, 'Where can I go? I am going to get a fowl or two from somebody's house. But why are you tied up here like this?' The jackal said, 'You don't know the joy of living in a palace. The people here give me nice food every day and keep me happy. But I am no longer happy here. I have nothing to do. For how long can I just eat and sleep? If only someone would release me, I would go. I prefer our jungle to the happiness of this palace. That joy is not here.'

The other jackal thought, 'It is so difficult to steal a fowl from someone's house. It is fine if the people there are not awake, otherwise they would beat me so that there won't be any way to run away. Even if I get a chicken, there are notorious dogs in the village and it is really terrible. How I hate the life of a jackal! You have to remain wary of the tiger, the dog, the fox and man. This fellow is so happy. He gets his food by merely sitting here. That too royal food! And he



dislikes that.' So he said to the jackal, 'If you want I shall release you. But you should tie me here in your place. Whenever you want, you can come back. I shall go away then. You must promise to do this for me.' The jackal agreed reluctantly. The second jackal released the first jackal and got himself tied up. Then the first jackal went away.

The next day the jackal was waiting for the royal food to be served to him. He saw two guards coming towards him. They were holding long sticks. They came near him and began to beat his back. The jackal had never got such a thrashing in his life. So he said to the guards, 'Sir, I am not the same jackal that was tied here. I am another jackal. The other jackal tied me here and went away. Please don't beat me.' But the guards did not listen to the jackal. They beat him mercilessly.

The jackal was indeed in bad shape after being thrashed twice every day. He would curse the other jackal whenever he suffered. The other jackal came at noon time and asked, 'Brother! How is the royal food? Are you enjoying it or not? You seem quite fat today. You will become even fatter tomorrow.' Then he left without responding to the other jackal's request to release him.



The Disguised Monkey

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had a young daughter. They were looking for a son-in-law to marry their daughter. But they were not able to find a young boy of their choice. The groom's family would also have to pay the bride price. The girl was very beautiful. Those who came to see the girl were not willing to pay the bride price. The old couple was not ready to accept their proposals. As the couple continued their search several days passed by. The girl grew older day by day. They belonged to the Gadaba community. If the girl grew a bit older people would not accept her as a bride. They would say the girl was old. The old man gave this some thought. One day he thought, 'People are not ready to pay adequate bride price for my daughter. However, that does not mean that I should keep my daughter at home forever. And if the girl runs away with someone at the time of the fair, then things would become really very tough. So I should not worry about the bride price, rather I should get a groom home.'

So one day he started to go in search of a groom who would stay at his house. On the way, he saw a langur. The langur asked him, 'Where are you going, uncle?' He replied, 'I am going to look for a groom who will stay in our house.' The langur said, 'Why don't you take me ? I will do every bit of your household work.' He said, 'All right. Let's go.' So he brought the langur home.

The old man and the langur reached home. The old man introduced the langur to his wife and daughter. The old woman was very happy to have a son-in-law. But the girl was unhappy. She got



irritated with her father because he had got a langur for her to marry. But she did not have the courage to tell her father anything. However, she was angry inwards. One day the old woman said to her son-in-law,

If you work in the jungle
There will be food at home
If you don't work
We all will starve.

Then she gave him an axe, a spade and a shovel and said, 'You go and work in the forest. Or else what will you eat? How will you feed your wife?' She wanted to test her son-in-law. If he was not able and hardworking what was the use to have him? It was better to test him before. Or else they could find someone else for their daughter. The girl was really sad ever since she saw her langur husband. She cursed her fate.

The langur on the other hand wanted to prove himself. As soon as he was asked by the old woman to do some work, he started for the forest with his axe and spade. When it was noon time, the old woman asked her daughter to take a vessel of gruel for her husband in the forest. The girl found faults with her husband and refused to go with the gruel.

The langur was waiting for the girl to bring him some food. When she did not turn up, he felt very sad. Out of anger he did not want to go back to his in-laws' house, instead he decided to go to the forest and set up a *manchan* and live there. He ate the roots of the forest and drank water from the streams. The girl was not happy with the langur, but her parents could see the extraordinary powers of the langur whenever they went to the forest. In the evening they discovered that the langur could fell hundreds and hundreds of trees with a single blow of his axe. And with a single blow of the plough he could dig several fields. They liked his ability and industrious nature and were very happy with him. They asked him to come home with them. The langur said, 'Your daughter did not come with the gruel



today. So I thought that she did not like me. So what is the use of my coming home with you? I won't come to your house anymore.' Even then the old man and woman requested him again and again. But the langur refused to come along. The old couple went back home. They went and told their daughter to go and meet the langur. But she refused. The old couple went regularly to the place where the langur lived. When they came back home they would praise him before their daughter. They would tell her, 'Dear daughter, our son-in-law has been working for a long time. He has been working very hard. He has turned the forest into cultivable fields and is growing crops there. How long will you remain unmarried? Please go and meet the langur. If he sees you, he will certainly come home. Then we will get you married.' Finally, the girl agreed with much reluctance.

It was time to take gruel to the langur. The old couple sent their daughter with some gruel. She was happy to see the crops in the forest. She appreciated the ability of her husband but the image of a langur continued to hurt her. She reached the forest and looked for her langur husband. She had not come to the forest for a long time. She went near the manchan. She saw a fire burning there. She found the langur baking beans. She had not talked to him. How should she address him? How could she take the initiative as a young girl? She was not supposed to. She gave hints of her presence with a laugh. The langur was so engrossed in baking the beans that he did not pay any attention to her. When he finally looked up he saw his wife. He was indeed very surprised. Then he welcomed her. He gave her baked beans to eat. Then he asked her, 'You are unhappy because I am a langur, isn't it?' The girl said, 'Yes.' Then the langur removed his mask and there stood a handsome young man before her. The girl felt that this was a miracle. The young boy said, 'I did all this to test you. You were unwilling to marry me because you thought that I was a langur. Now at least you should agree to marry me.' And the girl shyly said, 'Yes.'



The Iguana

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had a dog. The old couple would go to work in the fields every morning. The dog would also go with them.

One day, on their way to the fields the dog saw an alligator. The dog began to bark to chase the alligator away. But the alligator started to go inside into a hole. As the alligator was moving inside, the dog caught hold of its tail with its mouth. The alligator put in great force to get inside the hole. Both of them were struggling at each end. The old man thought that the alligator might drag the dog inside so he pulled at the dog's tail with great force. The old woman saw that the old man had become tired of pulling the dog's tail. So she too joined him. She held the old man's thread that was tied around his waist and pulled. This tug of war went on for a long time. It was difficult for the alligator. It relieved in the dog's mouth. The dog relieved itself on the old man's body, and the old man on the old woman's body. The old man let go of the dog's tail. The old woman gave up her hold on the old man's thread. Then the alligator crept inside the hole.



The Hermit

In a particular village there lived a brother and his sister. They were very poor. Their life was very difficult. They had no land, so they earned their living by doing odd jobs. They would gather leafy vegetables from the fields, dig sweet potatoes in the jungle or soak mango seeds and drink the soaked water. During the mohua season, they would collect mohua flowers and then dry and sell them in the market to get some money for their livelihood.

One day the brother sold a basket of mohua and got twenty five paise. He bought a puppy with it. The brother and sister took care of the puppy as their own sibling. The dog accompanied them to the forest. He would catch a rabbit or a deer or a boar and give these to his master. The brother and sister would give a share of the meat to the dog and happily eat the remaining meat.

One day a deity came as an old man to visit the brother and sister, gave them a ring and went away. Once they had the deity's ring in their home, their house became full of resources. They became money lenders and began to help the poor and needy people in their village. They worshipped the ring as their god.

One day a hermit came and asked them for alms. They asked what the hermit wished to have. The hermit said, 'I want the ring you have at home.' The brother and sister said that they were ready to give him everything but the ring. The hermit became furious with anger and left. One day when the brother and sister were not in the house, somebody came and stole their ring. When they came



back they were unable to recognize their own house because they found a small hut in the place of their big house. They thought that the hermit had stolen the ring. But where would they meet the hermit? So they began to live there as they had earlier, in poverty. Their dog and cat no longer got to eat rich food and became lean and thin. The dog and cat decided to go and find the hermit who had stolen the ring. They started on their journey. They went around smelling and finally reached the house of the hermit. Then the cat said to the dog, 'You wait here. I will go and get the ring.' The dog said, 'Yes.'

The cat went inside the house and found the hermit sleeping inside. The cat looked for the ring. She found it lying near the hermit's head. She took it in her mouth and ran away. She beckoned the dog to follow her. The dog also ran along with her.

On the way they came across a river. The river was flooded. The dog and the cat wondered how they would cross the river, they thought for a while and then decided to cross the river by swimming across it. So they jumped into the river water. While the cat was swimming, the ring fell from her mouth. A crocodile swallowed it.

The dog and the cat swam after the crocodile. After swimming a long distance, the crocodile emerged. As soon as the crocodile came out of the water the dog caught him. They fought for a long time. Finally, the dog tore the crocodile's stomach and took out the ring.

The dog gave the ring back to his master. Immediately, the house looked beautiful and they became rich again. After a few days, the boy got a groom for his sister and a wife for himself.







Bonda Folktales





The Bonda People

In a particular village there lived five brothers. They had a sister. They somehow managed to eke a livelihood. In the course of time they had conflicts among themselves, so they decided not to stay together but live independently. They went in different directions to earn their living. Their sister too went along with one of the brothers. They reached a forest. They had a dog with them. The dog would go with the boy to hunt in the forest. After her brother left for the forest, the girl would wear only a few clothes and get to work at home. Her brother's dog would return first. The girl would immediately put on all her clothes. Then her brother would arrive. Once, the dog got killed by a tiger. The boy went to the forest and came back home in the evening. He wanted to give an indication of his arrival by aiming an arrow. As the girl saw the arrow, she came to know that her brother was coming. She started running towards the jungle. The boy ran behind her. The hair fell off her head but she jumped into the river water and flowed away in the waters. Feeling sorrowful, the boy threw her sister's hair into the water. The water became a bush of the Simuli tree. The girl floated away and reached the bank of the river. It was the ghat of the Bonda people. One of her brothers lived there. He rescued the girl but could not recognize her because she did not have either hair or clothes on her body. They lived together and gave birth to children. Since then they are known as the Bonda people. Thereafter, the Bonda girls do not keep hair on their head and do not wear clothes but cover their body with natural forest products.



The Dead Never Come Back to Life

In a particular village there lived an old woman. After the death of her husband, she stopped going to anybody and stayed with her son. Her son used to go to the forest to work. He would dig roots and fetch firewood from the forest. The old woman would stay back at home.

One day the old woman went to the forest to get some roots with her son and his friend. They carried an iron rod to dig roots and a basket to carry them. They started digging in the forest. The friend dug a basket full of roots but the boy could not do as much.

The old woman's son did not get any root in spite of digging a lot. Yet, he kept digging. His friend then told him, 'You are not reaching any root. In spite of your digging, you are not able to get any root. It is already evening. So you can take half of my roots. But let us go back home.' The old woman's son refused and said, 'If I take some of your roots and go home, the villagers will think that I am an inefficient person. So you proceed. I shall dig on even if it is night and then come back home.' His friend left for home.

The boy resumed digging but he could only find rock. While he was digging, the iron rod hit a stone and broke. The boy became very sad and started to pray and sing hymns. The rod was moved by the boy's sorrow and devotion and joined its pieces together. The boy started to dig again. In that particular spot there was a swarm of bees. A bee bit the boy. The boy became unconscious due to the bee's poison. When the boy did not turn up late in the evening, his mother felt worried. She went and asked the boy's friend. He said, "Your son



is still digging roots in the jungle.'

But the old woman did not believe in what the boy said and went to the jungle along with him in search of her son. They reached the place where the boy and his friend had dug roots. When they looked around, they saw the old woman's son lying dead. The old woman cried incessantly finding her son dead. They took the dead body to the village and cremated it. Then they performed his death rites on the tenth day. The old woman arranged a feast for the villagers in keeping with her means.

The old woman was sad after the death of her son. She did not have any body of her own in the world. So she lived a sad life. She would eat if she wished or just sleep without food. One night as the old woman was asleep, her son's ghost came and said, 'Mother, give my spade, axe, digging rod, bow and arrows and all that is there.' The old woman woke up suddenly. She looked around. But nobody was there. Then she thought that it must be her dead son's ghost.

The next day she went to her son's friend and told him everything. But the boy did not believe what she said. He said that he would come and sleep in her house. He had his meal and came to the old woman's house to sleep. In the middle of the night, the ghost really came and woke him up. The boy was startled. Then he told his friend's ghost, 'Dear friend, you are my best friend. But you died. I have no good friend after your death. So you be here till morning. I am going to get some medicine. I will bring you to life with the help of the medicine. Then both of us will be friends again.' The ghost said, 'Hm' and the boy went in search of medicine.

When he came back, he asked his friend's ghost whether he was there. The ghost responded, 'Hm.' 'I think you haven't got any medicine.' The ghost said this and hid the broom stick somewhere. The boy said, 'Yes, I have got some.' Then he looked for the broom stick to sweep the floor and spread the medicine. Then the ghost said, 'If you have got them bring me to life.' The boy looked for the broom stick but could not find it. At last it was morning. And the ghost said, 'The dead never come to life,' and disappeared.



The Ghost with a Hole in His Back

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had a young daughter. They would get for their daughter whatever she wanted. Their daughter once asked her father to get her several things. The old man said 'yes' to her and started for the market. After her father left, the girl remembered that she wanted a painted pot to fetch water. But she had forgotten to tell her father about it. When she mentioned this to her mother, she said, 'You can go even now. Your father will be near the end of the village street.' The girl agreed and went out to meet her father. But she could not find him. So she went further. There was a graveyard nearby beyond which was a dense forest. The girl did not go ahead. She decided to call aloud to her father. She shouted, 'Baba, get me a nice pot from the market.' But the old man had walked a long distance. He could not hear her. The girl, however, felt that her father responded to her saying, 'Yes.' Believing that she had conveyed her message, she returned home happily.

Night fell. A ghost with a hole in his back carried a few pots from the graveyard and came to the girl's house. The ghost said to the girl, 'Listen, O daughter! I have got a painted pot for you.' The girl thought that her father had come back and asked him to come to the verandah. The girl's mother got water for him to drink. The ghost had a wash and sat down. The old woman served him rice and curry. The ghost's face could not be seen as he was sitting in the dark, away from the fire. The ghost ate the food but discarded everything through the gap in his back. The girl could see all this. She felt a doubt. So she



went to her mother and said to her, 'Mother, my father's back did not have a hole like this.' The old woman was also surprised. Then when she looked at the pot, she found that it had a crack. The old woman realized that this was a ghost who had a hole in his back. She thought if she became scared, she would die. So she hinted to her daughter that she should accompany her. Then the old woman said to the ghost, 'Please continue to eat. I will just accompany my daughter.' The ghost said, 'Okay.' Then the old woman lit a stick and put it near the gate. The ghost waited for a long time. But the old woman and her daughter did not come back. So he went to the gate. He wished to stretch himself near the gate. As he was doing so, the stick got inside his back and burnt his body. The ghost died on the spot. In the morning, when the old woman and her daughter returned home there was neither the ghost nor the stick.



The Liti Bird

One day an old man was walking to his granddaughter's village. On the way he felt thirsty. While he was drinking water a liti bird got into his stomach. The old man did not realize this. When he reached the village, his granddaughter was very happy to see him and came running to him. When the old man embraced his granddaughter his stomach got pressed and the liti bird shouted. The granddaughter asked her mother, 'Get me the liti bird.' Then the mother asked, 'Where is the liti bird? How can I get it for you? You forget all about it and play with your grandfather. I have a lot of work to do.' What could the granddaughter do now? So she asked her grandfather to get her a liti bird. He asked, 'From where shall I get the liti bird, my dear?' The granddaughter became very sad and wept endlessly. The liti bird shouted again. Then the girl said to her grandfather, 'Grandfather, please come and have your meal. The food is hot.' The bird heard this from inside the old man's stomach and felt scared. It began to think about a way to escape from the old man's stomach. When the old man opened his mouth to drink water, the bird flew away quickly. The girl exclaimed, 'There is the liti bird !' The old man was really surprised.



The Story of Hunger

In a particular village there lived a moneylender. He had large fields in the forest. He also had a lot many ploughs, bullocks and workers. The moneylender had only one son. He brought him up with much love and care. The boy did not know what sorrow was. The boy went to the orchard everyday and played with his friends. Once, someone in the garden said, 'I am feeling hungry.' Another replied, 'I haven't eaten today. I am feeling hungry.' The boy asked his friends what was hunger, but he did not get any satisfactory answer. So he kept wondering about hunger. One day he went and asked his mother, 'Mother, my friends say, hunger, hunger, hunger. What is this hunger? Tell me please.' The mother did not know how to answer the boy's question. She replied simply, 'Hunger means hunger.' The boy could not follow anything from her reply. So he said to his mother, 'I did not understand what you said, so I will go and ask my friends.' The mother knew that the boy would feel hungry after a few hours and come back home. So she let him go.

Then the boy started out to look for hunger. As he walked he crossed four hills. He got tired. He felt that he could proceed no further. It was already evening. His stomach ached. He wanted to eat something. But what would he get in the forest?

He did not know what to do. He resumed his walk thinking that there might be some village ahead. As he went further, he saw smoke nearby. He thought that there must be a village nearby and so he walked ahead. After sometime he reached a village and slept on the



verandah of a house. The owner of the house came and asked him, 'Who are you? From where have you come?' The boy could not answer him. He simply said, 'My legs are aching and my stomach is paining. Please give me some food to eat.' The man said, 'I will give you something to eat. But what will you give me in return? Do you have any money with you?' The boy realized that he had nothing with him. He said, 'I have nothing with me. But if you give me food to eat, I will give you one of my arms.' The man said, 'Well, give me your arm first. Then I will give you food.' The boy took an axe from the man, chopped off his arm and gave it to the man. The house owner gave him some curry and rice to eat. The boy ate the food and started again on his journey.

As and when he felt hungry on his way the boy would give away a part of his body and ask for food. He would eat the food and begin to walk again in search of hunger. In this manner he gave away all parts of his body. Only his head remained. But he still could not find hunger anywhere. He wanted to eat food once again. But now he had nothing to give in return. How could he cut his head? He did not have hands anymore. And who would recognize him if he cut his head? Who would recognize him if he went back home thus? He was thinking about this and rolling on the ground to proceed ahead. Suddenly, he saw that fire was spreading towards him from all sides. He thought that if the fire engulfed him, he would die. While he was wondering what to do, he saw a hole under a date palm tree. Without thinking about anything, he got inside the hole. The fire did spread, but because he was in the hole, nothing happened to the boy. However, he could not come out after the fire was put off. How could he? He had no hands or legs.

There was a village nearby. One of the villagers had a young daughter. She never came out of her house. But one day she went to the forest to dig the root of the date palm tree with her friends. She carried with her a digging rod and a basket.

The girls reached the forest and started digging roots at various places. Once when the girl raised her rod to dig, the head inside the



hole cried out, 'No, please don't do so.' The girl thought, 'Who can be there?' She looked around but could not find anyone. So she raised the rod again. She heard the voice again. Then the girl realized that the voice was coming from inside the hole. When she went and looked into the hole, she saw a head blinking inside. The head said, 'Please take me out of this hole.' The girls felt surprised and asked, 'Who are you? Why are you living like this?' Then the head told his story to the girl. The girl was full of pity. She asked the head, 'Will you come with me?' The head said, 'Yes.' Her other friends were coming towards the girl. The girl covered the head with leaves. She said to her friends, 'Please proceed, I will follow you a little later.' The girls went on towards their village.

After her friends had left for the village, the girl put her head inside her basket and started for her home. When she reached home, she hid the head in another basket and put rice husk over it. But she left the nose and the eyes uncovered. When her parents asked her how much root she had got, she said that she did not get any root. Her parents thought that since the girl was new to the job, she may have got only a few roots. So they remained quiet.

When it was noon time, the girl went and said to her mother, 'Mother, please give me some rice gruel to eat.' When her mother gave her the food, she went near the basket and fed the mouth of the head. As days passed by, the parents observed that the girl was becoming lean and thin. They wanted to find the reason for this. One day they observed the girl and found her going near the basket inside which was a pair of blinking eyes. When the girl's father removed the husk, he found that there was a head in the basket. The girl's father got angry when he realised that because his daughter was giving her food to the head, she was left unfed and therefore she had become so thin. He was about to throw away the head when the girl rushed to him and told her father about her husband. She said, 'Father, the head is my life. If you throw it away, I shall die.' What should the father do? She was his only daughter. He could not displease her. So he kept the head back in the basket.



Then the girl asked her parents to get her married to the head. Her parents knew that if they refused, she would become adamant. So they drove her out of the house along with the head.

Then the girl went away and began to live behind the house under a banyan tree. The girl and the head did not get anything to eat. She remarked, 'I am feeling very hungry. Then the head asked, 'What is hunger?' The girl said, 'Do you eat or not?' The head said, 'Yes.' The girl asked, 'Why do you eat?' The head said, 'I feel like eating.' The girl said, 'That feeling is called hunger.' The head finally understood what hunger was.

Then the head prayed to god to drive away his hunger and to give him back his former body. Thus he got back everything—his wealth, house and the crops. He also got back his entire body. The girl was very happy. She went to her parents and told them everything. They did not believe her. Then she brought the boy home and showed him to her parents. They all became very happy.



The Dove

Once in a particular village, a wife and husband had a quarrel. They stopped talking to each other. So the wife went back to her parents' house. But her father thought, 'In any case, the daughter has to live in her husband's house and so she should go back there.' He called his daughter and tried to make her understand. But the girl was adamant and refused to listen to him.

One day her husband was away in the forest. The girl's parents wondered how they could bring them together. The girl's father had a dove. He put the dove in the husking hole. When the girl came there to sweep the floor with her broom, she saw a dove there. She asked her mother, 'Whose bird is this?' The mother replied, 'I don't know. Go and ask your husband.' But how could she ask her husband? So the girl thought of a plan. She sang a song aloud for her husband to hear,

How beautiful is the feather
The legs are of red colour
Tell me, my husband, what is the name of the bird
And from where have you brought it ?

She sung the song several times and was about to weep at the end. The boy could not see his wife so sad. He went near her and sang,

This is a dove
Dear, don't you know ?
So, they came together.



The Boy and the Ghost

In a particular village there lived a boy. He had nobody. He used to fetch firewood from the forest and give it to the people. In return, they would give him some food to eat. This was how he earned his living. One day, the villagers went to the forest to cut grass. The boy too wanted to go with them to get some grass to build a thatch for his house.

But it was not enough to merely want to cut grass. One should have a sickle to cut grass. The boy did not have a sickle. So he went around and asked for a sickle. But everyone refused to lend him one. At last, someone gave him a broken sickle. He took the sickle and went to the forest to cut grass. All the villagers went inside the jungle. But this boy did not enter the forest. He saw a lot of tall grass near the graveyard. So he shouted aloud, 'Listen, is there anyone here? I have lost my sickle somewhere and I am not able to find it. Can you please find it for me?' There was a spirit in the graveyard. The spirit said to the boy, 'Yes, I will find it.'

The spirit gave a sickle to the boy. The boy asked, 'Who are you?' The spirit said, 'I am a spirit. I see your difficulties everyday, so I want to help you. You may go back home but before you go to sleep, please say what you want and that will be given to you. Now, you can go home. I shall drive away all your difficulties.' Then the boy went back home.

Night fell. The boy wondered what he would ask for before he went to sleep. At that time it was raining heavily. There were leakages in the house as the boy lived in a thatched house. The house was full



of water. The boy said, 'I want a good house.' Immediately, his house became big and nice. The boy slept peacefully. The next day, the boy went near the graveyard and looked for the spirit. The spirit came and asked him, 'What happened?' The boy said, 'I have a good house to live in but I don't have any land. I want some fields in the jungle.' The spirit said, 'Oh, you want some fields. All right, you may ask for it before you go to bed.' Then the boy went home and at night asked for fields.

The next day he went to the spirit and the spirit showed him the fields in the jungle. The boy was really happy. He said, 'All right. I have now got some fields. But I can't work alone in the fields. I need helpers.' The spirit said, 'Oh boy! I told you. You can ask for whatever you want before you go to bed. Why do you come here to ask me everyday?'

Every night the boy would ask for all the things that he wanted. Thus he got wealth, gold, silver, bullocks, cows, sheep, pigs and hens, thanks to the spirit. The same villagers who used to hate him started liking him and became his friends. But the boy was not happy. He felt that he lacked something. One day he went to the graveyard and met the spirit. The boy said, 'I have got everything, thanks to you. But I still feel that I am short of something. But I don't know what it is.' The spirit laughed and said, 'What you do not have is a wife.' The boy said, 'Yes, I want a wife.'

When he went home, he asked for a wife before he went to sleep and a beautiful girl appeared before him. Then both of them lived happily together.



The Fish Girl

In a particular village there lived an old woman. She had a son. They had no one else in the world. Whatever the son grew in the fields supported both. The old woman's son went to the fields early in the morning everyday. He would finish his work at noon time and then go to the nearby stream to bathe. In that stream there lived two fish sisters. The sisters were young and unmarried. The sisters would look at the boy when he bathed. The elder sister fell in love with the boy. But she had no chance to speak to him and when she did get a chance, she felt very shy. The younger sister knew the elder one's desire.

One day as the boy was bathing, the younger sister went near him and said, 'Will you listen to me for a while?' The boy was amazed. He saw nobody around. She said again, 'Why are you looking here and there? I am here, in the water. Look at me.' The boy looked again and saw her inside the water. He asked, 'Were you calling me?' The girl said, 'Yes.' He asked, 'Why were you calling me? Do you have any work with me?' The girl said, 'My elder sister has fallen in love with you. She wishes to marry you. If you don't marry her she will die. What do you say? Will you come to our house?' The boy heard her and thought to himself, 'If this girl is so beautiful, her sister too must be beautiful. And if her sister is beautiful, I shall certainly marry her; or else, I will return home giving them some excuse.' So he said to the younger sister, 'Yes, let us go. If I don't go with you, it will be unfair.' The girl guided the boy home.



When they arrived home the elder sister was pleasantly surprised. The boy looked at the beautiful young fish girl. When the elder sister mentioned her proposal to marry him, the boy immediately agreed. He said, 'I am ready to marry you, but I need to go to the market to buy a garland and some ornaments. Then I shall give these to you to wear and take you home. Please wait here till I am back from the market and I call you.'

As the young boy was talking to the girl, a fox was listening to him. When the boy came out of the house, the elder sister accompanied him till some distance. When he saw them, the fox hid under a bush. The girl then went back home. A tiger also saw them and decided to eat one of the girls. The tiger sat there for a long time. It was already evening. The tiger came to the girls' house. He found the door was closed. He called out in the boy's voice, 'Open the door. I have got ornaments, rings and necklace for you.' The girl was waiting for the boy. As soon as she opened the door, the tiger put her on his back and carried her away into the jungle. The younger girl saw all this. But she could not do anything. After all she was only a fish girl.

When the young boy returned home, he found the younger sister weeping. When he asked her the cause of her weeping, she told him everything. The boy went to the jungle to rescue the elder sister from the tiger. He was very angry. He had an axe on his shoulder.

When the boy reached the forest after a long journey, he saw a heap of bones lying at a particular spot. The boy thought that the tiger might be somewhere around. When he looked around, he found that the tiger was hiding in a bush and peering at him. As the tiger tried to move away, the boy pounced on him and struck him several blows with his axe. Then the boy went to the younger sister and said that he had chopped the tiger into pieces. The younger sister said, 'The tiger has killed my elder sister. Please marry me.' The boy accepted the girl's proposal and married her. Then they lived happily.



Rice and Cucumber

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They worked very hard. Once they prepared a field in the jungle and sowed rice. They also planted some cucumbers. The paddy yielded well. The cucumbers also grew in plentiful. They had a large field. One had to keep watch on the entire field. So the couple built a machan to have a full view of the field. Yet, it was not possible to keep watch all over. If they looked over one side of the field, the other side would be flocked with birds, peacocks, monkeys, rats and hens. They would come in groups and eat the crops. The old man wanted to get rid of them all. So he thought of a plan. He said to his wife, 'Listen, dear! I shall not go to the field tomorrow. You should go and sit in the field and weep aloud saying, "My husband is dead."'

The next day the old woman went and did as her husband had told her. She started weeping,

Listen you pack of monkeys of the jungle
Listen, you pack of monkeys
Listen, you birds
Listen, you birds of the jungle
Listen, you peacocks of the jungle
You rats of the jungle
Listen, all of you
My husband is no more
Now you can play in the jungle



Without any fear.

All the birds and animals came near her and praised the old man and expressed their condolences. Some said, 'He was really a wonderful person.' They came to her house to pay him their respects. They stood surrounding his body. The old man was ready with his weapons.

He got up, took his axe and began to attack them. The creatures were not ready to defend themselves. The axe cut someone's tail, somebody's wings and someone's ears. Some of the creatures collapsed on the spot. The rest simply fled away.

After sometime the old man saw that many creatures were lying dead. He prepared some meat and had a delicious curry. The remaining creatures never came to his field again and the old man and his wife lived happily together.



The Tailless Jackal

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They did not have any land. They cleared a small patch of forest and grew a few things for their livelihood. The old man went to the forest early in the morning. The old woman would go to give some gruel to the old man around noon time.

A jackal used to observe the old woman every day. One day, while the woman was passing through the forest, the jackal asked her, 'Grandma, what are you carrying on your head?' The old woman said, 'Dear son, I am carrying some gruel for my husband to eat.' The jackal said, 'All right, go ahead.' The old woman went ahead.

The next day, when the jackal saw the old woman he called out to her once again. The old woman went near him and asked, 'O! What happened? Why did you call me?' The jackal said, 'Please see, something is biting my tail. I can't see what it is.' The old woman put the pot of gruel on the ground and caught hold of the jackal's tail to look for what was biting the jackal.

In the meantime, the jackal finished the gruel in the pot, replaced the lid and said to the woman, 'Grandma, it is getting late. You must make a move. I will see you later.' The old woman did not realize that the jackal had finished the gruel that was there in the vessel. She took the empty pot and went to the old man. When the old man saw the empty pot, he got furious. The old woman did not know how this had happened. The old man, feeling very angry, returned home leaving his day's work incomplete.



Thus the jackal would finish the old man's gruel everyday and the old woman would go to her husband with an empty vessel. But she could not make out the jackal's cunning. One day, the old man asked her, 'Dear, you cook gruel everyday, but why do you bring me an empty vessel?' The old woman wondered about the jackal. She realized that till she met the jackal, the vessel weighed heavy, but after she left the jackal it felt light. Then she understood the jackal's ploy and told her husband everything.

The next day the old man disguised himself as an old woman, took a knife and a pot of gruel with him and went to the jungle. The jackal was waiting for the old woman to come. He saw the old woman coming. As the old man arrived, the jackal showed him his tail. The old man took out his knife and cut the jackal's tail. The jackal ran away for life. When the jackal met his relatives they asked him about his tail. The jackal told them the whole story. They decided to take revenge on the old man. A rat was listening to their discussion. The rat went to the old man and told him everything that he had heard. He further advised the old man to heat a sickle and hide himself behind the door of the chicken shed. Then when the jackals arrived to pick the chicken one by one, he should press the sickle on their necks.

The old man heated the sickle and got ready behind the door of his hut. As the jackals tried to get inside the door, he pressed the sickle on each of their necks. They thought that the chicken were hitting them and died there on the spot. The tailless jackal did not venture to go inside and ran away.

The jackals who fled thought of how to give their dead jackals a decent burial. They decided that they would get rice and goat from the old man's house. The rat heard about this. He went and told the old man. The old man decided to kill them all. He thought of a plan. He got inside a big earthen pot and covered its lid. He made some holes in the pot so that he could see from inside the pot. He asked his wife to place some rice on the leaves that were spread on the floor. He hid inside the pot. The jackals came in the night. They found



that there was nobody in the house. They found some rice and a goat tied to a pillar. The jackals were really happy. They took the rice and the goat and left the house. They cooked the rice and prepared some goat meat. The old man was still sitting there. The jackals went to bathe in the pond as the meal was getting ready. The tailless jackal was guarding the rice and meat. As the other jackals left for the pond, the old man came out with a stick and hit the tailless jackal on his head. The jackal died on the spot. Then the old man put some rice and meat in the dead jackal's mouth and hid himself inside the pot again.

When the other jackals came back, they found that one more jackal was lying dead. So they kept another jackal there to guard the food and went to give the dead jackal a burial. The old man again killed the jackal who was guarding and put some rice and curry in its mouth. When they came back, the jackals found yet another jackal dead. Thus the old man killed all the jackals. Only the tailless jackal survived. As the old man came to kill him, the jackal ran away for life. The old man had a nice meal and went back home.



The Palas Flower

In a particular village there lived seven brothers. Of them, six were married. The youngest brother was not yet married. One day the youngest brother saw that his sisters-in-law were wearing beautiful flowers around their ears. He liked the flowers. So he went and asked his elder sister-in-law to give him a flower but she refused. Then he went and asked his other sisters-in-law. They too refused. The younger brother got angry and decided to go to the jungle to get the flower.

He walked inside the forest. He did not know the exact spot where he would find the flower. Still he walked on. As he covered some more distance, he saw a wild cock. He asked the cock, 'Dear Uncle, where shall I get the red flower that blossoms in the forest?' The wild cock replied, 'My dear nephew, I don't understand which flower you are talking about.' Then the boy described the flower to him. The cock said, 'Dear nephew, do you think that palas flower is so near? You will have to walk a long distance.' The boy said, 'All right, please tell me the direction. Am I following the right path?' The cock said, 'Yes, you may go ahead.'

As he walked ahead he met a tiger. The tiger said that he still needed to walk quite a distance. As the younger brother walked on, he came to a palas tree. The tree was full of red flowers. He was very happy to see the flowers. He thought, 'I can take as many flowers as I want. My sisters-in-law did not give me any.'

He went near the palas tree. There he found a beautiful girl



threshing paddy. He had not seen such a beautiful girl before. He looked at her attentively. He wondered how he could attract her. He climbed up the tree and sat on a branch without drawing the girl's attention. Then he started dropping flowers on her, one after another. Till three flowers fell upon her the girl thought that the wind had blown them. But when more flowers continued to fall, she felt surprised and looked up the tree. She saw a young boy sitting on a branch of the palas tree. The boy and the girl looked at each other. Then the girl asked him to come down. When the younger brother came down she asked him, 'Who are you? Why did you climb the tree?' The boy told her everything. The girl said, 'You have come to take the flowers. But do you think that you will be able to take these flowers from here?' The boy asked, 'Why not?' The girl replied, 'You do not know that I am the adopted daughter of a tiger. My father has gone into the forest. He will come back after sometime. If he finds you here, he will kill you.' The boy said, 'Then tell me what I should do.' The girl said, 'Please don't worry. I shall turn you into a comb.' Then she turned the boy into a comb, stuck the comb in her head and resumed her work.

After sometime, the tiger came back. He brought a wild bone with him. He put the bone under the tree and sniffed here and there. Then he asked, 'Oh girl, there seems to be a man some place nearby.' The girl said, 'How can a man come here? The smell must be mine. If you want to kill, then kill me.' The tiger said, 'What are you saying, my girl! You said that I would kill you? I have brought you up with so much care.' The girl said, 'Would I not tell you if a man had come here? Will I tell you a lie?' Then the tiger ate a bone and slept peacefully.

The next day when the tiger was away on hunting, the girl turned the comb into a man. They talked for a long time. The girl served him food to eat. The boy persuaded her to flee with him. The girl refused initially thinking that her father would kill them both. But the boy assured her that he would take care of themselves. So she agreed. It was time for her father to come back home. She again



turned the boy into a comb and hid him.

Her father returned home. He saw that the girl was sobbing. He went to her and asked, 'What happened, dear? Why are you weeping?'

The girl said, 'Father, I am your daughter. You have brought me up since childhood. You keep saying that we have a lot of money, gold and ornaments. But you haven't shown them to me.' The tiger said, 'You are weeping for that? What is there to weep for such a small matter? If you had asked me, I would have shown you everything. All that is yours. See, I am a tiger, I can't wear those ornaments and move around. Don't weep any more, I shall show you everything.' Then the tiger took the girl with him and showed her everything he had. The girl was astounded to see all the ornaments. The tiger went to eat the prey he had caught and fell into deep sleep.

The next day, after the tiger left for the forest, the girl turned the comb into a young boy. Then they took the gold and ornaments belonging to the tiger and fled. It was evening when the tiger returned home. He looked for the girl but she was not there. He looked for the ornaments but could not find them anywhere. He looked for her in the forest but did not find her.

The younger brother and the girl reached the boy's village. People were asleep. The youngest brother went and woke his eldest brother. But he did not open the door. Then he went to wake his mother. He said, 'Ma, I am your youngest son. I went to get the palas flower. I have got the palas flower. I have also got a wife for myself.' When his mother opened the door she was very happy to see her son with her daughter-in-law and the flower.

When the elder brothers and their wives woke up, they too were happy to see their younger brother and his wife. The tiger looked for the girl for a long time. He continued looking for her without food and water and finally died in the forest.

The younger brother and his wife lived a happy life with the money, gold and ornaments.



The Ghar-Juain

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had a beautiful daughter, but they did not have a son. So the old man wanted to bring a son-in-law home. He was on the lookout for such a person. But nobody was willing to be his son-in-law.

One day, the old man went out to look for a son-in-law. On the way, he came across a jackal. The jackal asked him, 'Where are you going?' The old man said, 'Where should I go? I am going to look for a son-in-law.' The jackal asked, 'Why, isn't your daughter good looking? If she was good looking, people would have chosen her at the weekly market when she visited it.' The old man felt a bit hurt. He said, 'Yes, she is very beautiful. We received many proposals along with offers of money and ornaments but we do not wish to give her away. For how will we manage without her after her marriage? We do not have a son. Who will take care of us?' Then the jackal said, 'Oh! So you are looking for a son-in-law who can stay at your home. If you like, I am ready to be your son-in-law. I am good at certain jobs that nobody can do. Would you agree to take me as your son-in-law?' The old man thought for a moment and agreed. He took him home and introduced him to his daughter. Then the old man and woman offered the jackal some gruel and curry. The jackal had his meal and rested for some time. Then the old man came to him and said, 'Son-in-law ! Is it good to laze around like this ? Go to the forest with an axe. You can't have rest like this if you are to be my *ghar-juain*. The jackal took the axe from the old man's hand and went to



the forest.

It was already late in the night. The jackal did not come back. The old man thought he would not return. The old man was upset because the jackal had taken his axe. He was sitting at the door step when the jackal came back with a load of things. When the old man went to see what he had got, he found four fowls and a bundle of maize.

The old man was very happy. He embraced the jackal happily. Then he asked the jackal, 'Son-in-law, from where have you got all this?' The jackal narrated to him the story of how he had got all of this from the backyard of somebody's house.

The next day, the old man went with his *ghar juain* to get fowls and maize. He liked the taste of the fowls. So he wanted to have them again. If he could steal them on his own, what was the use of the jackal? He could let go of the jackal and get somebody else as his son-in-law. So the old man went into a maize garden in the evening. As he was trying to cut the maize, they made a sound. The owner of the garden was guarding the field at a distance. When he heard the noise, he came running with his stick and gave a blow on the old man's head. The old man ran towards his house.

When the old man arrived home his son-in-law also came with a bundle of firewood. He got terribly angry with the jackal. He said, 'You rascal, I would have died today, just because of you. Go away from my house. I don't need you.' Then the old man drove the jackal out of his house.

Again, the old man wanted a son-in-law. He started looking for one. As he was going around, he came across an otter. The otter asked him, 'Where are you going?' The old man said, 'I am looking for a son-in-law.' The otter offered himself. The old man did not agree at once. He narrated to the otter his past experience. Finally, he took the otter to his house. The otter promised the old man that he wouldn't cheat him. Then the old man introduced him to his wife and daughter. On the first day the otter had his meal and took some rest. The next day the otter asked the old man to come with



him along with a basket.

The old man and the otter began to walk. The old man was not able to comprehend where they were going. They reached the banks of a river. The otter asked the old man to sit on the riverbank. Then he went into the river and gathered some fish in the basket. The old man was very happy. They went back home and had a very good meal. The old man observed how the otter had caught the fish. The next day he sent the otter to get firewood from the jungle and himself went to catch fish in the river. The old man should have waited for the otter to leave. However, he started out first. He reached the river and dipped into the water. His face, nose, and eyes filled with mud.

The old man came out of the river after much difficulty and reached the bank. Then he saw the otter coming towards the river. When the otter asked him what the matter was, the old man got angry with him and shouted, 'You rascal! This is how you taught me to catch fish? I would have died today. Get out of my house or else I shall kill you.' The otter left the old man's house.

Then the old man thought with a cool mind, 'Whoever comes as my son-in-law has proved worthless. I should get a suitable son-in-law. I must search for one.' So he started on his search. As he went along, he came across a wild boar. The old man liked the plump body of the boar. He thought, 'This one will be suitable as my son-in-law.' Then he proposed to the boar to be his son-in-law. The boar accepted his proposal and went with the old man. The old man did not send the boar to work. The boar took rest on the first day. The next day, the boar got up and asked the old man to come with him with a basket. The boar dug roots with his mouth and gave them to the old man. The old man had carried with him a straw band to light fire. Then the boar asked the old man to dig the root and to press the straw band on his back. As the old man pressed the band on the boar's back, the boar got stimulated and started digging further.

Then the old man put together all the roots the boar had dug and went home happily. The old man thought, 'This boar digs roots well. One only has to see whether he can get firewood from the



forest. If he can, then we can make him our son-in-law.'

The next day the old man sent the boar to fetch firewood from the forest and he, with his wife, went to dig roots. The old man carried a straw band as well. He tried to dig out the roots with his mouth. But he could not do so. He thought that if a straw band was pressed on his back, he would feel stimulated. So he asked his wife to press a burning straw band on his back. As the old woman pressed the straw band on the old man's back, he jumped in pain. He got furious with his wife and slapped her. He went back home in anger. When the boar returned home the old man was furious to see him. The boar asked him what the matter was. The old man chased him so that he could kill him. When the boar asked him, 'Why do you want to kill me?', the old man replied, 'Because I imitated you, I had to suffer. Get out of my house or else I will kill you.' The boar ran away.

The old man never thought of getting a ghar juain again and got his daughter married without money or ornaments.



The Mouse Sisters

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had only one son. The son cleared the forest and grew crops in the fields. The old couple managed their living out of this. They were aged. So they were not able to work for wages.

Their son went to the field everyday. After finishing his work, he would bathe in the forest stream and go home. In the forest there lived a pair of young she-mice. Every day, when the boy would keep his clothes on the riverbank and enter the stream, the mice would take them away and hide them under a bush. After his bath, the boy would find it difficult to locate his clothes. He would find them only with much difficulty. But he was not able to understand why the clothes were hidden regularly under the same bush. So the next day, when he went inside the stream to bathe, he kept an eye on his clothes. After a few moments, the mice sisters came and started pulling the clothes towards the bush. Feeling helpless, the boy caught hold of one of the mice sister's hand. It was the elder sister. The two sisters then stood there and started cutting jokes. The old boy also chatted with them and exchanged jokes. He asked about them. Then the mice sisters took the boy to their house.

But the story did not end there. They all met regularly, gossiped and made merry. Thus the boy was attracted towards the elder sister. Then they started to live together. The boy would go home in the night to sleep.

After some days the boy went to another place to work along with



other people of his village. But he was unable to go and tell this to the mouse sisters in the jungle before he left for his new work.

The boy had sowed seeds in his fields before he left for another place. The elder sister would wander in the fields and wait for the boy hoping that he would come back. But the boy was yet to return. She would come back sad.

The elder sister was pregnant by eight months. So she yearned for her husband. The crops ripened. Still the boy did not turn up. So the mouse sister felt anxious. One day, both the sisters felt very angry. They reaped the crops and kept them inside the hole they lived in.

The old man and his wife realized that their crops would have ripened. So they took a sickle each and went to reap the crops. They noticed that the crops had already been harvested. As they were wandering in the fields, they came across a hole in the field. They understood what may have happened. They realized that the mice had taken away their crops. They were very angry. But that day they had not taken the digging rod with them. They decided to come to the field the next day and see the mice. With this thought they went back home.

The next day when they were digging the hole, the elder mice sister started experiencing delivery pains. The younger sister was deep inside the burrow. As the old couple went on digging, they reached the spot where the elder mice sister was lying. She had already delivered. As soon as the child saw the old man it called out, 'Grandfather!', jumped on to the old man's lap and sat there. The old man was angry with them all. How could he change with the child's call? He immediately killed the elder mouse with his rod. As he was killing the mouse, the child said, 'Grandfather, that is your daughter-in-law, your son's wife. Don't kill her.' But the old man did not listen to what the child said and killed the mouse. He left the child there, took the dead mouse with him and came back home with his wife. The younger sister was watching all this from inside the hole. As the old couple left, she came out of the hole. She wept bitterly and took her nephew inside.



The old couple took the mouse, prepared meat of it and ate it for a few days. They dried and preserved some meat for their son so that he could eat it when he came back.

After a few days the boy came back home from work. When his parents served food to him, they gave him the meat curry of the mouse. The boy saw the meat and asked what it was. His parents said that it was mouse meat. When he heard this, the boy became a bit upset. He was reminded of his beloved mouse. He stopped eating and went to the hole of his beloved in the forest. There he called out the name of his beloved. But his beloved did not turn up. When he called several times, his sister-in-law came out weeping with his son. After coming to know of all that had happened, the boy held out his hands to take the child. His sister-in-law handed over the child to him. Then the boy removed the knife that was tied to the thread around the child's waist, pierced it first into the child's chest and then into his own. Thus both the boy and the child died.



The Brother and Sister

In a particular village there lived seven brothers and a sister. Their father was dead. The brothers and sister had only their old mother. Among the brothers, six were married but the seventh one was yet single. Their sister too was unmarried. They were looking for a bride for their youngest brother. But they were not able to find one. During those days people did not follow social norms and conventions. This is quite an old story; even older than their great grandfather's time.

One day, the youngest brother got an orange from somewhere. So that his mother and sisters-in-law could hear him, he said in a loud voice, 'Listen, all of you. I am keeping this orange here. I will marry the person who eats it.' Then he went to bathe.

After some time the youngest sister came from somewhere and saw the orange. She did not know who had kept it. So she put the orange in a pot and went to get water from the river. When she reached the stream, she peeled the orange, threw the peels into the river and started eating it. Her brother was bathing in the next *ghat* of the river. The orange peels drifted along the stream and reached the ghat where her brother was bathing. The brother thought that his orange had been eaten by someone. He had decided that he would marry the one who ate the orange. So he hurried home. Reaching home, he asked his mother, 'Mother, who has gone to the river to bathe?' His mother saw that except for the youngest sister, all were at home. She said, 'All are there at home. Only my youngest daughter is not here. She might have gone to the river to fetch water. But why



do you look so worried?’ The youngest son said, ‘I had told you all in the morning that I shall marry the person who eats this orange. My youngest sister has surely eaten the orange when she went to fetch water from the river. Please go and see where she is. Call her and get me married to her.’ Everyone listened to what he said; they had no other choice. So all the six brothers and their wives arranged for his marriage. The bandsmen were called. Drums, begule and cymbals were played. Young boys and girls drank and danced.

Food was cooked. Meat of cows, pigs, hens and goats was prepared. But what was the use of all these? The youngest daughter who had gone to get water had yet not returned. All were waiting for her. They wondered why she had been delayed.

Meanwhile, the youngest sister sat on the bank of the river with her legs spread, happily eating the orange. A frog asked her, ‘O little one, what are you eating?’ When the girl said that she was eating an orange, the frog said, ‘O, that is why you have spread your legs, is it? Over there your youngest brother too is sitting with his legs spread.’ The girl could not follow the frog and asked, ‘Whom shall he marry?’ The frog said, ‘You, who else?’ The girl was very surprised and asked, ‘To me? My youngest brother would marry me? Why?’ The frog said, ‘You behave as if you do not know anything. Your brother had kept an orange at home and had told everyone that he would marry the person who ate that orange. Now, you have eaten the orange. So he will marry you. Who else should he marry?’ The girl did not know what to do. She untied the boat and rowed it into the middle of the river and moved down to the lower ghat.

There, everyone was tired of waiting for the youngest sister to come. The eldest brother saw that she was in the middle of the river. He called out in a loud voice, ‘I used to call you sister before. Henceforth, you will be my sister-in-law. Sister-in-law come soon, else the auspicious moment of your marriage will pass.’ In spite of his calls, the girl did not turn up nor did she come to the bank of the river.

At last, the elder brother came back home. All her sisters-in-law



called out, her mother too called in vain. Finally, the youngest brother came and said, 'You were my sister before. But after eating the orange, you are now my wife. I had kept that orange and announced to everyone that I would marry the girl who ate it. You ate that orange. Then why do you hesitate to become my wife? Come, the auspicious moment is passing. Come soon.' The girl was very angry to hear this. She recited a mantra. Clouds gathered and it began to rain. The youngest brother felt scared of the clouds and rain and went back home.

In the village the people became tired of dancing. Even then the bride did not come. The people got angry and went back to their houses. Night fell. Even then the youngest sister did not turn up. People shut the doors of their houses and went to sleep. At once there was a sound on the door of the eldest brother. The brother said, 'Who is there in the middle of the night?' The girl said, 'Earlier, you were my brother. Now you have become my brother-in-law. I, your sister-in-law, have come. Please open the door.' The eldest brother realized that it was his sister and did not open the door. He asked her to called out to the other brother and went back to sleep.

Then the youngest sister went and called each one of her brothers. But nobody opened their door. Then she went and called her mother, 'You were my mother till yesterday. From today onwards you are my mother-in-law. So, O dear mother-in-law, please open the door. Your daughter-in-law has come.' Mother said, 'I won't open the door. You may call your husband.' Then the youngest sister knocked at the door of her youngest brother, 'You were my brother earlier. Now you are my husband. I, your wife, have come. Open the door.' The youngest brother recognized his sister's voice. He opened the door and called her inside the room. The girl was entirely wet with rain. He set up a fire so that she could sit near it. He asked her to sleep and then went to sleep himself.

After her brother had gone to sleep, the girl took out her knife, pierced it through his chest and later also pierced herself. They both died.



The next day, the entire village came to know about their death. But they could not make out who had killed whom. Then they realized that since the brother had wanted to marry his sister this had occurred. Since then nobody dares to think of marrying one's sister in the Bonda community.



The Flower of Blood

In a particular village, there lived seven brothers and a sister. Six of the brothers were married. The youngest brother was not yet married. His name was Sisa. The sister was the youngest. She too was unmarried.

Once, the seven brothers and their wives were building a ridge around a pond. But as the water entered the pond, the ridge would break. The seven brothers tried their best to build a dam but could not succeed. Once they all went to the pond. The youngest sister stayed back home to cook. The pond had a wide gap and the brothers were trying to bridge it. They put a lot of soil into the gap. But it was of no use. They thought that Mother Earth was unhappy with them and so they needed to make a sacrifice to make her happy. This was discussed only among the six brothers and their wives. They did not tell anything about this to their youngest brother. The sisters-in-law asked the youngest sister to get *ringa*, *kereng*, comb from the village. Then the sisters-in-law went to call the girl from the village.

After some time, the youngest sister came wearing all her ornaments and holding a comb in her hand. As she was walking by the ditch, her comb fell inside. The six brothers asked her to go inside the hole and get the comb. As the girl got inside the ditch the six brothers and sisters-in-law covered the ditch with soil. The youngest brother was not able to understand anything. The girl shouted from inside the ditch that if they covered her with soil she would die! But they did not listen to her and went on piling more



soil in the hole. The girl cried, asking them not to kill her so mercilessly. She appealed to her brothers. But nobody listened to her.

Slowly, they covered her up till her neck, then upto her nose and finally till her head. Her cry was no longer heard. As she was covered she could not be seen. The elder brothers asked their youngest brother to fill soil into the hole. But he refused. The six brothers and six sisters-in-law said, 'This is for your good that we are saying this; place some soil in the ditch; or else, we will put you inside the hole as we have done with her.' The youngest brother felt really scared and put soil into the ditch. Slowly, they all put soil into the hole and covered it. Then they built the dam. The dam did not break. As the dam did not break, the six brothers and their wives thought that the earth had indeed wanted a sacrifice.

But the youngest brother was upset to have done such a merciless deed. Though he was terribly scared of his brothers and their wives, tears rolled from his eyes. As the dam was intact, the six brothers and six sisters-in-law went to the river to bathe. Then they went home and had some drink. But Sisa had no interest in such things. He would always think about his sister.

Days passed thus. After the dam was built nobody went to the pond. The youngest brother thought, 'It is already several days that we buried our sister. I should go to the pond to see how things are.'

Then he went to the pond and saw that on the spot where his sister had been buried, a tree had come up and it had borne a flower as red as blood. As he was about to pluck the flower, it moved away a bit and asked him not to pluck it. Sisa asked the flower, 'Who are you?' The flower replied, 'I am your sister, now blossomed into a flower of blood. If you really want to pluck me, get two earthen pots, then pluck me and take me home. Then I will come home with you.' So Sisa went to get new earthen pots.

After some time he got the new pots, plucked the flowers and kept them in the pots. He took the pots home and hid them in such a place that nobody could see them.

The next day the seven brothers started out to work in the fields.



After Sisa's six sisters-in-law had left for the forest to collect roots, the blood flower sister came out of the pot, took a broom and swept the floor. She also cooked rice and curry. Then again she turned into a flower of blood and returned to the pots.

When Sisa's sisters-in-law came, they were surprised to see all the work completed. When their husbands returned home, they told them everything. They asked them whether they should eat the food that was cooked. Sisa said, 'When the rice and curry has been cooked, we should eat it. Why not?' All of them agreed. But they still had a doubt of the food having been cooked by a spirit or a ghost.

At night, the sisters-in-law decided that one of them would stay back at home the next day and observe who had done all the work. Then they discussed who among them would stay back. The eldest sister-in-law said she would remain at home.

The next morning the seven brothers and Sisa's five sisters-in-law left for work. The eldest sister-in-law took some beans, sat under a tree and started peeling them. She would peel off the beans and eat them. She also kept an eye on the house. As she peeled the beans, she started to doze and finally fell asleep. When she opened her eyes, it was later than breakfast time. She immediately got up and went inside the house. She saw that somebody had already finished all the household work and left. After some time everybody came back from work. When they asked who had done the work, she said that she had not seen anyone. When they asked her the reason, the eldest sister said that she had fallen asleep. Then fearfully, they ate the rice and curry.

The next day Sisa asked everyone to go for work and he himself stayed back home to know who was doing the work. He hid in a corner. After some time the youngest sister came out of the pot. She swept the house and went inside to cook. The youngest brother came out and caught hold of her hand. The sister reacted saying, 'I have no relation with you. Why are you holding my hand? Do you think that I shall stay back if you hold my hand? Listen, you all are people of this world. I live in the other world. So there is no relation between



you and me. Leave, leave me.' Sisa said, 'I can see you are my sister. Still you say we have no relation. You may do whatever you wish. I won't let you go.' Then she said, 'All right, you may keep holding my hand.' And she disappeared.

After some time when everybody came back from work, Sisa told them everything. They were surprised to hear this. Sisa said, 'You were all so merciless to kill her. But she has not frightened you by becoming a spirit. Instead she is serving you.' When they heard this from their younger brother, the elder brothers and sisters-in-law realized that they had committed a sin and became very sad.



The Story of the Young She-Bear

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had two young daughters. They were looking for a bridegroom for their elder daughter. After searching for a long time they found a suitable bridegroom in a village. The boy had no one. He lived alone. He had cleared a large patch of forest, turning it into fields where he grew beans, maize, gram, and pumpkins. So the couple got him married to their elder daughter.

After marriage, the husband and wife lived happily. The man would get up early in the morning, take rice and curry with him and go to the fields to work. And when it was noon, the girl would bring rice and curry to her husband in the fields.

One day, as the girl was taking rice and curry for her husband, a she-bear blocked her way. The she-bear asked for the ring, necklace, bracelet and dress worn by the girl. When the girl did not incline to give them, the she-bear threatened her, 'Give them to me, else, I will eat you.' Then the girl removed all her ornaments. But the bear was not satisfied with these. She asked for rice and curry too and disguising herself as the girl, went to the fields with the rice and curry.

Having removed all the ornaments and clothes, the girl had nothing on her body. She did not want to go anywhere in that condition, so she sat under a simuli tree. There, the bear disguised herself as a woman, went to the field and served rice and curry to the boy. The boy could not make out her disguise. Then the bear said to



him, 'I will be at home. You come back.' She went home, covered herself with a cloth and lay on the bed.

The boy came back home in the evening. His wife was sitting on the branch of a simuli tree. As the boy passed by, she sang a song narrating how a she-bear had taken away her ornaments and gone home to serve food to him. But the boy could not hear the song. He went home and called his wife by name. His wife was not at home. The she-bear was sleeping, covered with a cloth. When the she-bear heard the boy's voice, she responded, 'Hm, hm.' The boy could not follow anything and asked, 'What has happened to you?' The she-bear imitated the voice of the boy's wife and said, 'I have got severe fever. I feel like eating crabs.' The boy said, 'From where can I get crabs in the middle of the night for you?' The bear said, 'If I don't eat crabs, I will die. I want crabs by any means.' When the boy heard her mention death, he understood the urgency and left immediately for the stream.

On the way to the stream there stood the simuli tree where his wife was sitting, singing the same song and weeping. As she saw her husband approaching the tree, she sang even more loudly.

The boy thought that a spirit was singing the song. So he ran towards the river in fear. He caught a couple of crabs in the river and was coming back home when he passed by the same tree and heard the song again. But the boy did not pay any heed to the song and went back home. He called out to his wife, 'Are you asleep?' The bear said, 'Hm,hm,hm, have you got crabs for me?'

The boy said, 'Yes.' Then the bear said, 'Give me the crabs, I will eat them.' The boy said, 'How will you eat them raw? You need to roast them.' The she-bear said, 'My feverish mouth will relish the crabs raw. Give them to me.' The boy gave the crabs to the bear. She ate the crabs in a hurry and went back to sleep, making a 'hm, hm, hm' sound.

The next day the bear did not get up from her bed and said that she would like to eat roots. The boy went to the forest to get roots. On the way he came across the simuli tree. His wife was sitting on



the branch and weeping and singing the same song. But he did not pay any attention to her and went to dig roots. He got some roots and returned home and asked, 'Is your fever gone now?' The bear said, 'Give me the roots at once.' The boy said, 'Should you eat the raw roots? Wait, let me boil them. Then you may eat them.' But the bear said, 'No, no, don't boil them. Give them to me as they are. I will eat them. They will taste good to my feverish mouth.' Then the boy passed the roots to the bear. She ate those raw roots in a moment and lay again on the bed making a 'hm, hm, hm' sound.

Four to five days passed thus. Still the bear did not get up. The boy thought that she would die. He took the bear to be his wife and said, 'What kind of fever have you got that you have been sleeping and making this 'hm, hm, hm' sound? You are not eating anything except raw crabs and roots. How long will you survive by eating raw these crabs and roots? If you die, your parents will blame me saying that I killed their daughter. Therefore, I am going to call your parents. They will see your condition and do the needful.' The bear said, 'No, no, please don't go to call my parents.' But the boy was determined that he would go and meet his parents-in-law. So in spite of the bear's resistance, he went to meet his wife's parents at their house. The bear did not know about this. She thought that he had gone to get roots for her. So she lay on bed and made the same 'hm, hm, hm' sound.

The boy went by the same simuli tree. His wife was sitting on the same branch and singing the same song. But the boy paid no heed to her and left for his parents-in-law's house. When he reached there his father-in-law was not at home. He had gone to the forest. But the boy had no patience to wait for him to come back. He spoke of his wife's condition to his sister-in-law and brought his mother-in-law back home with him. He asked his sister-in-law to send his father-in-law to his house when he returned home. As they were passing by the simuli tree, the girl repeated the same song sitting on the branch of the tree. But their minds were somewhere else. The boy and his mother-in-law did not bother to listen to the song and



continued to walk towards the boy's house. The boy showed his mother-in-law the place where the bear was sleeping. He spoke aloud so that the bear would hear him, 'I have got your mother here. You decide whether you want to stay here or go to your parents' house.' The bear was really scared. She was almost certain that she would be caught. When the old woman came near her she again started to make the 'hm, hm, hm' sound and covered herself with a cloth. The old woman sat near her and moving her hands over the hands and legs of the bear, asked, 'Are you feeling better, my dear?' The bear did not say anything and just made that 'hm, hm' sound. The boy's father-in-law came back home after finishing his work in the field. When he heard the news about his second daughter, he immediately started for his son-in-law's village.

As the girl saw her father from a distance, she started singing the same song. But when her father reached near her, she could not sing loudly anymore as she felt exhausted without any food for three to four days. She simply started weeping on the branch of the tree. Her father sat under the tree. The girl sat weeping on the tree. At once, two tear drops fell on her father's body. Her father wondered what was falling from above and looked up. He saw that his daughter was sitting on the branch of the tree and weeping. He found it difficult to understand the situation. Then he asked his daughter to get down. When she came down the tree, he asked her what had happened and came to know about everything. Then he took her to his own house and left her there and went to his son-in-law's home.

When the boy saw his father-in-law he said that the girl had fever. His father-in-law said, 'There is nothing to worry. This is merely a fever. I shall drive away her fever. Please get me a hot digging rod. Then I will take care of her.' The boy immediately got a hot digging rod and gave it to his father-in-law.

The she-bear was listening to all this. But she had no way to escape. So she continued to lay on the bed and made the 'hm, hm, hm' sound. The girl's mother was sitting beside her and weeping. The father-in-law brought the hot iron rod and said, 'Dear daughter



! You have fever, haven't you? Just open your mouth. I will put some medicine inside. Your fever will vanish immediately.' The bear would die either way, whether she opened her mouth or not. As soon as she opened her mouth, the father-in-law put the hot rod inside her mouth. How could the bear survive if a hot digging rod was placed in her mouth! She died on the spot.

The father-in-law wept in pretension. The mother-in-law also began to weep. The boy too wept. Then they removed the ornaments of their daughter worn by the she-bear and performed the death ritual and came back home.

As the old woman entered her house, she saw her elder daughter in the house and shouted, 'Ghost, ghost.' Then the old man told her the whole story.

The old man was angry with his son-in-law for giving such trouble to his daughter for the sake of the she-bear. So he did not want to tell the truth to his son-in-law.

Days passed by. The boy was very sad after the death of his wife. He was not keen to marry another woman. He did not know that his own wife was not dead. So he thought he would go to his father-in-law's house.

When he reached the house of his in-laws, he found his wife husking paddy in the husking room. As soon she saw him she ran inside the house. The boy thought that it must be his wife's ghost. So he went inside the house and asked his parents-in-law who the girl was. They said that it may have been his sister-in-law. But the boy did not believe them and went inside the house. He saw his wife standing and smiling behind the door. He could not believe this. At last, he asked her, 'Weren't you dead?' Then his parents-in-law explained everything to him. Then he realized that all that had happened had been the handiwork of the she-bear.







Folktales of the Didais



The Bondas and the Didais

Long, long ago there lived a man in a certain village. He had two sons. Since childhood they always quarrelled. As they grew up their hatred for each other became very intense.

They grew into young men. After their marriage, their quarrels increased. They quarrelled even over small matters. They would quarrel either over the plants in the field or the date palm tree.

Their parents tried to resolve their quarrels and bring an understanding between the two, but it was in vain. At last, the brothers separated. One brother went to live with his wife in the Bonda slope of the hill and the other lived on the other hill. The children of the brother who live on the Bonda hill are called the Bondas and the children of the brother who live on the Didai hill are called Didais.



The Story of the Sons-in-law

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had three daughters. All the three daughters were unmarried. The old man was looking for sons-in-law. With much difficulty, he found three grooms. They were a vulture, a swan and a wild boar.

After he had found his sons-in-law, the old man went to the priest. The priest chose a date for the marriage and on that particular day, the old man performed the marriage of his three daughters after which the girls went with their respective husbands.

Several days passed after the marriage of the daughters. One day, the old man said to his wife, 'Dear wife, it has been a long time since our daughters' marriages were performed. Let us go and see how they are managing, and whether they are keeping well or not. We should go and see them. What do you say?' The old woman said, 'If you like, please go and see their condition and come back.'

The old man went to his boar son-in-law first. The boar lived in a cave. Both his son-in-law and daughter were happy to see him. The old man was tired. That day he slept in the cave. The next day, he got up, brushed his teeth. When he was having his gruel, the boar came with a basket and said, 'Uncle let's go to the forest to dig roots.' They went together to the forest to get roots.

When the basket was full, the old man said, 'Dear nephew, let us go home now. The basket is full. There is no space to put more roots.' So they made a move towards home.

After staying there for a few days, the old man decided to go back



home and said so to his son-in-law. His son-in-law and daughter gave him a basketful of roots and he came home happily.

The old man did not need to go to the forest to dig roots for some time. He and his wife baked the roots he had received from his son-in-law and ate them happily. They ate all the roots. One day, the old man said to his wife, 'Take a basket and come with me.' The old woman carrying a digging rod and a basket followed her husband. The old man asked her, 'Why are you carrying the digging rod?' The old woman said, 'You said that we will go to dig roots. If we don't carry a digging rod how shall we dig roots?' The old man said, 'You need not worry. Just come with me.'

They went to the forest. The old man saw a bush under which there were roots. He tried to dig the roots with his mouth. But he could not dig them. When he stood up the old woman could not recognize her husband. He rubbed his face against the mud and it was stained with blood. The old man lost his front teeth. His mouth was full of mud. The old man got angry and went back home.

The shaman came and gave him some medicine. With much difficulty, the old man was cured. After he was cured, he said to his wife, 'I was bedridden for such a long time. I feel better now. I think I should go and see the swan son-in-law of mine.'

Then he set out and reached the house of the swan son-in-law. His daughter and son-in-law were happy to see him. The old man took rest that day. The next day after the old man had finished brushing his teeth, his son-in-law came and said, 'Uncle, please carry the basket and come with me.' The old man asked, 'Where shall we go?' The swan said, 'Don't ask about it, just come with me.' The old man said, 'All right. Let us go.'

They went to the lake in the forest. The swan said to the old man, 'Please wait here. I will go inside.' The swan went into the lake. He dived into the water, caught some fish and threw them across to the old man to keep in the basket. The basket soon became full of fish.' The old man said, 'Dear nephew, let us go home now. The basket is now full. There is no more space in it.' Soon the old man became



tired of eating fish every day. So he said to his son-in-law and daughter, 'I don't like to stay here anymore. The old woman is alone at home. I feel uneasy when I think about her. So I shall leave for home today.' Then, his daughter and son-in-law packed a basketful of different kinds of fish and bade him farewell.

The old man reached home. The old man and his wife brought a variety of liquor and enjoyed it with the fish that the old man had got from his son-in-law's house. Once the fish was over, the old man asked his wife to come with him with a basket. The old woman remarked, 'Last time after coming back from the boar son-in-law you got irritated with me. Hope you aren't taking me to do the same.' The old man simply ignored what the old woman said. He said, 'I only asked you to come with me. You need not ask me all these questions.' So the old woman followed her husband without asking anything.

The old man asked his wife to wait on the bank of the lake and went into the water to catch fish. The water level came to his knees. He dived inside the water planning to catch fish with his mouth as his swan son-in-law did. But he only came up with a mouthful of mud. There was no fish. Thus he went deeper into the water. The old man did not know how to swim. He went deep inside the water but he did not know how to come out. His nose and ears were full of water. He drank a bellyfull of water. He was struggling to come out when two young boys saw him and rescued him.

Later, the old woman teased the old man. The old man had loose motions as he had eaten mud. He got medicine from the shaman and recovered. Then one day he said to his wife, 'I don't feel all right staying at home. I think I should go and visit our vulture son-in-law and daughter.' The next day, he left for his vulture son-in-law's house. His son-in-law and daughter were happy to see the old man. The old man took rest that day. The next day, his vulture son-in-law came and said to him, 'Uncle what shall you do sitting at home? Let us go to the forest and hunt peacocks.' The old man agreed and went with him.



The vulture asked the old man to sit under a tree. He explained to the old man, 'See, please don't cough after you smoke. The peacocks will come after some time but if you cough, they will fly away.' After some time the peacocks came. The vulture hit them with his beak and they died. Some fled away. Some died there. They collected the dead peacocks and brought them home. Soon the old man became fed up of staying at his vulture son-in-law's house and eating peacock meat everyday. So he said to his son-in-law and daughter that he would like to go back home. They gave him some dried meat and bade him farewell.

When the old man returned home he and his wife ate the dried meat happily. After a few days they finished the meat. Then the old man asked his wife to take a basket and come with him. Feeling scared, the old woman did not ask him anything. She simply carried a basket and went along with her husband. The old man went to the maize field with his wife. He asked his wife to hide behind a tree. Then he said, 'Please hide behind the tree. See, you should not even cough. The peacocks will come to eat maize. If you make any noise they will fly away.' The old woman said, 'You may think that you have learnt how to catch peacocks but I think you will be in trouble like before.' The old man did not say anything but asked her to keep quiet. After some time the peacocks came to eat maize. The old man jumped from the tree at the peacocks like his vulture son-in-law and died on the spot.



The Chameleon

In a particular village, there lived an old couple. The man was not quite old but his limbs were not that active. The old woman was the bread earner of the family. They would manage on whatever she earned. She would work daily and get some *mandia* or maize. She would also get firewood from the forest. She would use the wood for cooking.

One day, when the old woman went to the forest to gather firewood, she found a chameleon. She had no son or daughter. So she got it home and brought it up as her child. The chameleon also loved the old woman very much.

One day, the old man passed away. Then the old woman and the chameleon lived alone. The chameleon reached its youth. Once, the *panchayat* was in session. The chameleon asked the old woman, 'Grandma, why are people gathered here?' The old woman replied, 'What is it to you, whatever they do?' The chameleon said, 'That's right. It does not matter to me. I just wanted to know. If you don't want to answer, it is all right.' Then he kept quiet. The old woman could see that her grandson was sulking. In order to stop him sulking, she said, 'They are saying that if anybody has strength then he should clear the forest, make friends and earn his living.' Then the chameleon said, 'Oh, is that the matter? Alright. You need not worry. Please do not go to work for others anymore.' The old woman said, 'What shall we eat if I don't work for others?' He said, 'Grandma, you will soon see what I am going to do.'



The next day, the chameleon got up and asked the old woman to tie a small axe to his body. So she tied a tiny axe to his tail. Then he went to the forest, recited a mantra and cut down many big trees by waving his tail. After the trees fell down, he burned them all. He came back home and told his grandmother, 'Grandmother, I have prepared a large field.' But the old woman did not believe him.

The next day, the chameleon said to the old woman, 'Grandmother, when you go to work in someone's field, scrape the threshing ground and get some maize, mandia or rice. If you get their seeds, I will sow them in our field.' When the old woman went to work, she scraped the threshing ground and got some grains of seed with her. She gave them all to the chameleon. He said, 'Grandmother, please tie a scrapper to my tail, make a bundle of the seeds and tie it to my tail. I shall go and sow them in the field.' The old woman did so. The chameleon went to the field and saw that the trees had turned into ash. He was very happy. He chanted the mantra, dragged the mud with the scrapper and sowed the seeds by waving his tail.

After a few days, the chameleon said to the old woman, 'Grandmother! Please come and see how the paddy, maize and mandia have ripened in my field.' The old woman could not believe him. She wanted to know whether this was indeed true. So she went with the chameleon to see the field. She was really very surprised to see all the crops. She asked the chameleon, 'Whose field have you brought me to see? Is this really your field?' The chameleon said, 'You don't believe that the jungle is mine?' Still, the old woman did not believe him. So they went back home.

That day the chameleon asked his grandmother for a sickle. The old woman asked him, 'What will you do with a sickle?' The chameleon said, 'I shall go tomorrow and harvest the crops.' The old woman warned him and said, 'Dear, never go to anybody's field to reap crops. You will be certainly killed. I will get you a sickle but you should reap the crops only if it is your own field.' The chameleon did not say anything and simply smiled. The old woman went and got a



sickle from somewhere and gave it to him.

The next day the chameleon took the sickle and went to the field. He tied the sickle to his tail, recited the mantra and reaped the crops in the field. He arranged for people to carry them home. They kept the crops in the threshing ground. The old woman was very happy. After a few days, the crops were threshed and stored in the granary.

The old woman did not need to work to earn wages. The villagers started calling the chameleon a landlord. The old woman and the chameleon led a happy life. But suddenly, the old woman passed away. The chameleon felt very lonely. He thought, 'What is the use of earning so much wealth? There is nobody to eat.' So after the death rituals for his grandmother were over, he went to look for a wife.

He wandered through several villages and tried to attract many girls but nobody liked him. Though he was a chameleon, he spoke like humans. People would throw stones at him. Even after visiting several villages, he could not get any girl for himself. He felt disappointed. He thought, 'What is the use of living?' Then he returned home sorrowful. When the old woman was alive, people never misbehaved with him. But after she passed away, people started hating him. One day, while he was taking a walk, some boys called out to a group of dogs and pointed towards him. The dogs pounced at the chameleon. They bit and hurt him. The chameleon was afraid and ran into the forest.

He reached a dense forest. He wondered about the behavior of man, 'I haven't harmed any one of these people, but they harass me so much. Now, I won't go near them. I won't trust them. This forest is better than the village. So I shall live here.' Since then the chameleon has been living in the forest.



The Mouse and the Jackal

In a particular village, there lived an old couple. They had a rat. They also had a number of dogs. Near that village lived a pack of five jackals. They used to go near the boundary of the old man's house and try to catch fowls. But they were never successful. So the jackals were very unhappy. One day, the mouse went to the jackals' house and saw that the jackals were whispering and planning something. They mentioned that they would go to the old man's house and steal all the rice, salt, chilli powder and fowls. The mouse overheard this and ran back to the old man and told him everything. The old man said, 'We shall hide the basket before they come here. And you should cover yourself with a basket holding a hammer in your hand. If they venture near the basket where the fowls are kept, you must hit them on their heads.'

It was evening. The old man hid the fowls in a basket somewhere. Then he took a basket, sat inside it and covered it with a large lid. It was nearly midnight. The pack of five jackals entered the house. They looked here and there. The old woman was fast asleep. The old man was not there. They decided that they would steal the rice, salt and chilli powder. Then a jackal said, 'I will go and take the fowls.' As he went near the basket, the old man gave him a hard blow on the head. The jackal cried out in pain, 'Oh God! Oh God!' Then he ran away from there. The others told him, 'See, you are born in the jackal clan. But just because a fowl hit you on the head, you became frightened and left.'



Then another jackal went to get the fowl. He too got a hard blow on his head and came back. The last jackal said, 'You are not true jackals. You are all useless. Simply because a fowl hit you on your head, you gave up. Let me go. I will go and get the fowls.' He found a rope, tied the basket around his neck and asked the other jackals to follow him. They reached the house. He said to the others, 'See, there seem to be many fowls inside the basket because it weighs so much. So let us first cook the rice and later go to have a bath.' The others agreed with him.

The rice became ready. The jackal said, 'One of us should guard the basket here and the others can go to pluck leaves to prepare leaf plates and cups.' Thus, one jackal remained to guard the basket and the rest went to pluck leaves. They asked the jackal on guard not to eat the rice. They said, 'If you do so, your own spirit will kill you.'

The jackal stood guarding the basket and rice. He felt scared, in case the fowl inside the basket would hit him. He closed his eyes and sat there. The old man saw through a hole in the basket. He came out and gave a severe blow on the jackal's head. The jackal died on the spot.

The other jackals came back and saw the jackal lying dead. They thought the jackal had eaten rice and so his spirit had killed him. They took him to give him a decent burial. They asked one jackal to stay back to guard the basket.

The jackal who was guarding the basket felt scared. The old man saw through the hole that the jackal was not looking at the basket. He came out of the basket and hit the hammer hard on the jackal's head. The jackal died on the spot. The rest of the pack came and took the dead jackal's body to give it a decent burial. The old man killed the jackal who remained to guard the basket. When the other jackals came they found the jackal dead. Then, one jackal went to give this dead jackal a funeral. When he had left, the old man hit the jackal guarding the rice. When the jackal who had gone for burial came back, he found that the jackal was dead. He was very puzzled and sat there worrying. The old man came out and decided to give him a



blow. At that moment, the jackal saw the old man coming to his side with a hammer and understood the entire story. The jackal ran away for life, never looking back.

Then the old man put chilli and salt with the rice, had his fill and went back home happily.



The Snake and the Chameleon

In the hole of a tree there lived a chameleon. One day a man went and cut down the tree to make a plough. As he was shaping the plough, he saw a chameleon in the hole of the tree. He brought the chameleon home and took care of it as his own child. The man would go to the pond to catch fish. The chameleon too would go with him and thus learnt to catch fish.

One day, as the man was about to set out to catch fish, the chameleon said, 'Master, I too will come and catch fish.' Then the chameleon went to the pond. He sat on the bank of the pond for some time. As he was about to catch some fish, a Goddess appeared and said, 'If you get the lotus flower in the middle of the pond, I shall give you as much fish that you ask for.' The chameleon was very happy to hear this. He said, 'Oh, the lotus flower ! You may leave now, O Mother Goddess. I shall certainly bring it to you.'

Then the chameleon entered the water. First, he entered the water up to the knee level. Then he went up to the waist level. Then he went deeper till the water reached his neck and finally, upto his head. Then he could not go further and drowned. What he saw inside the water made him tremble in fear.

A snake had her house inside the pond. As the chameleon was trying to flee, the snake saw him and said, 'Oh boy! You have come till here. Why are you running away? Why are you afraid? I won't eat you. Do come near.' The chameleon went close to her. But the snake did not make any attempt to swallow him, so he was happy.



He said, 'You called me here. But what shall I do here?' The snake said, 'You have come here. What is the worry? You need not work. You can eat, drink and rest. There is no hard work. As you can see I have only one child. You need to baby-sit him. Do you agree?' The chameleon agreed to the plan.

Then the chameleon stayed there to baby-sit the snake's child. The chameleon found that the situation was delicate. The snake left early in the morning and came back in the evening. The chameleon thought, 'These are snakes. They belong to the clan of snakes. I am a chameleon. We are their prey. For how long can a prey live with its hunter? Today, they do not wish to eat me. But who knows what will happen tomorrow? So when the snake is away, I shall kill all of them and go away or else I will have no escape.'

One day, the snake had gone out of the hole in search of food. After the snake left, the chameleon got a big spoon of amber and put this upon on the small snake and left for his old master's house. The master was very happy to see the chameleon. He served him rice and curry. Then the chameleon left for the jungle to get firewood.

In the meanwhile, the snake came and found her children dead. She got terribly angry and went to the chameleon's master's house and bit him. The chameleon died immediately. She raised her hood and remained there.

After some time the master came back from the forest and found the chameleon dead. He began to mourn. The master was almost senseless with grief. So he did not notice the snake. When he came to his senses he stacked the wood, set it on fire and placed the chameleon into the fire. The snake stood with her hood raised. The snake too thought, 'I have lost my kids. What is the use of my surviving?' Thus she jumped into the fire and died.



The Boar and the Girl

In a particular village there lived four brothers. They had only one sister. All the brothers were married. But the girl was yet not married. The brothers lived together. They loved their sister very much. They wanted to get her married to a suitable boy. So they were in search of a good match. But the sisters-in-law were very different in their attitudes. They would behave well with her when the brothers were around but ill-treated her when their husbands were away in the forest. The sisters-in-law would laze around and ask her to husk the paddy, wash the clothes and send her to fetch water from the stream. Her work would not finish there. They would then ask her to go to the threshing ground and thresh mandia, grams or pulses.

The girl often, 'Even animals are better than these cruel humans.' She thought herself meaner than to be domesticated cattle. But there was no other way, where could she go? Why should she bring trouble by telling her brothers of the unkind behavior of their wives? They would not take anybody's side. So she preferred to show that everything was fine when her brothers were at home.

After the brothers left for work, she would do whatever work was given to her. Then at noon time she would take gruel to her brothers in the forest. One day, while she was on her way to give gruel to her brothers, she met a boar. The boar was standing under a tree and watching her. The girl ran for some distance and again looked back at the boar. She found that he was still standing there and watching her. She was not afraid any more. She went on walking.



Then she met the boar everyday at that particular spot. The boar would keep watching her. One day the girl decided to ask the boar why he watched her. The boar said, 'Dear, beautiful girl. You are young and unmarried. If I say something you may get angry. That's why I just watched you instead of saying any thing. But since you have initiated the conversation, I shall tell you everything.' Then the boar said, 'Dear beautiful girl, I feel very attracted by your beauty. I wish to take you home as my wife.' The girl was very angry. She said, 'You think that you are very handsome? Have you seen your long chin and teeth? Have you seen your straight and standing hair? If you haven't seen your good looking body as yet, please go and have a look at yourself in the river water. Then you can get married to me.' Having said this she went to the forest.

But the boar did not give up. At home the girl's sisters-in-law ill-treated her, in the forest the boar harassed her. So for the girl her home and the world were the same. She could not even tell her brothers to beat the boar. For if she did not find the boar on her way to give gruel to her brothers, she felt unhappy. She now wished that the boar would say to her, 'I want to take you home, dear.' Sometimes she felt happy when he proposed though she did not know why. The boar tried his best to make her accept his proposal, but he did not succeed. Then he decided to flee with her. One day the girl was coming along as usual on the same path. The boar did not stand under the bush as he used to, instead he came and stood in her way. When the girl asked him to give her way, he did not pay any heed. The girl thought, 'How can I jump over him?' She prayed to him to let her pass. Even then the boar did not leave. Then the girl thought she would jump over him. She was about to leap when the boar sprang up, took her on his back and ran into the jungle.

After running a long way, the boar reached his home and made the girl get down and said, 'From today onwards, you are my wife and I am your husband.'

There, the brothers were waiting for their sister to bring them gruel. It was beyond noon. So they had a doubt. They thought that



she might have been attacked by a tiger or a fox. So they left their work and came looking for their sister.

One of the brothers went home thinking that perhaps she would be at home. The other three brothers went to the forest. The brother who went home did not find her there. So he went and told his brothers so. Then they all looked for her in the forest, but could not find her. They returned home very sad. Then they all went daily in search of the girl, but did not find her. Several days passed by.

As they were looking for her, they found her in a cave. They were really excited to see her. They asked her to come with them. But she said, 'I am happy in my husband's house. So I won't leave my husband and go with you.' They said, 'How can your husband marry you without paying us the bride price?' The girl said, 'My husband is a wild boar. We fled and got married. And about the bride price, we shall pay it after some days by earning wages together.'

The brothers condemned her for marrying a wild boar and tried to persuade her to come with them so that they could get her married to a handsome boy. They also abused her husband saying all kinds of negative things about him. The girl did not like to listen to abusive words about her husband and said, 'It is true that my husband is ugly. He is not good looking at all. But he is better than your beautiful wives. What is the use of their beauty? They ill-treated me everyday and finally drove me away. But this ugly beast has been very nice to me. I am quite happy here. I don't know what misery is. I shall live with this ugly husband of mine. You may go and live with your beautiful wives. I prefer my husband to good-looking but bad natured people.'

The brothers were not aware that their wives ill-treated their only sister. After coming to know of the fact, they went home, drove away their wives and married new women.



The Jackal and the Boar

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had a maize field. Their harvest was quite good but a jackal would come in the night and eat the maize. The old man wanted to teach him a lesson, so he set a trap to catch the jackal.

The old man set the trap and hid nearby with a stick. The jackal came to the field and ate the maize, but while moving towards the trap he fell into it and got trapped. He tried his best to get out, but did not succeed. The old man came to see whether the jackal had fallen in the trap. When he found the jackal in the trap, he gave a hard blow on the back of the jackal with his stick. The jackal felt miserable. So he said to the old man, 'O old fellow! There is nobody around as it is night. I fell into the trap and now you are beating me. Am I going to flee somewhere? Will you kill me in a hurry? Now you go and sleep quietly. In the morning, you can bring other people and beat me. People will come to know that you have trapped a jackal and they will appreciate your bravery. I will remain in the trap as I can't come out.'

The old man thought, 'The jackal is right. If I kill the jackal and fling it away in the night and tell people about it, no one will believe me. They will all say that the old man is telling a lie. So I will kill him before the people tomorrow.'

The jackal was trapped inside the trap. His body was swollen. The jackal saw a boar approaching. The jackal asked him, 'O boar, my nephew, where are you going?' The boar recognized the jackal's



voice and said, 'Who ? Jackal uncle! What are you doing here?' The jackal said, 'I am in trouble nephew! Whatever I say to the landlord, he refuses to listen to me. Even if I refuse to eat maize, they give me forty or fifty maize cobs. That's how they have kept me. See, I have become so fat. My stomach gets upset eating maize all the time.' The boar had seen the jackal before. He used to look pale at that time. But now he really looked fat. So he did not disbelieve what the jackal said. He said, 'Uncle, you are really fortunate. That is why people feed you well without demanding any work from you. But for us having maize is a dream.' The jackal said, 'Yes, I would like to go away from here, but they have tied me up. You know, it is not just maize, they give me what they themselves usually eat, but I don't like these things. The old couple has kept me as their son. But I don't like to stay here. If someone unties the rope, I will request the old couple to keep him in my place and request them to treat him as their son. Then I will go back to my hole.'

The boar's mouth watered as he heard about maize. He did not want the chance to go out of hand. He wouldn't get a leaf of grass even after wandering through the jungle. He had to be careful of tigers and foxes and other animals. He preferred to stay in one place and enjoy his food instead of living in perennial fear. He wondered, 'The jackal has gone mad. So he wants to leave this place. Let him go.' The boar said to the jackal, 'Uncle, if you make the old couple accept me as their son, I will untie you.' The jackal said, 'O, I will make them take you as their son immediately. You should just release my leg from the rope.' The boar untied the rope from around his leg and said, 'I have untied the rope from around your leg. You said that you would let me become their son.' The jackal said, 'Alright. Since you insist, come I will tie you up.' Then he tied the boar and said, 'Nephew, you be here. I shall go and call the old couple.' Then he fled from that place. The boar kept waiting throughout the night, but no one turned up. When the old man came with the villagers he saw a boar instead of a jackal. They were very happy and feasted on the boar's meat.



The Porcupine Girl

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They cultivated land in the forest and lived together. Their son had a *manchan* in the fields and lived in it to guard the crop. He would sit and play his *sarangi*. There lived a porcupine nearby. She had two young daughters. The porcupine and her daughters would listen to the music and come near the manchan and smile. The elder daughter felt attracted to the boy. The boy lived there during nights. So she lived with him during nights. She was in her eighth month of pregnancy. One day the boy went to his village. There the villagers took him along with them for *beth* work. The boy however was thinking about the manchan. But what could he do? He couldn't disobey his people. When their son was away for the beth, the old couple went to keep watch over their fields. As they were moving around, they came across a couple of porcupines. The porcupines got into the hole of the tree as they saw the old couple. When they saw the porcupines, their mouth watered. They desired to eat the meat of the porcupines. So the old couple gathered some dry leaves, placed them at the opening of the hole and set fire to the heap. The heat and smoke got into the hole. The elder porcupine was near the mouth of the hole. She inhaled the smoke and died. The younger one was a bit far. Nothing happened to her. Then the old couple took the dead porcupine and went home.

As they took the porcupine home and were preparing to sharpen the knife on the stone, the porcupine which was inside his mother's womb said, 'Oh grandmother, you are sharpening your knife. But



take care when you cut my mother's body. I am your grandson, I am inside the womb.' The old couple could not understand this. They removed the porcupine's thorns. Then they cut open the porcupine's stomach to remove her intestine. As the knife touched the stomach, again the baby cried, 'Oh grandma ! Please take care when you cut open the stomach, or else my ear will get cut.' The couple understood that the porcupine had a baby inside. They removed it slowly and kept it in a basket. Then they cut her meat and ate it happily. The rest they kept for their son to eat when he came back.

After a few days the boy returned after attending *beth* with the villagers. His sister-in-law sang a song narrating what had happened for her brother-in-law to listen. But the boy did not understand anything. He reached home. The old couple were very happy to see their son back and served him rice and meat. The boy was about to eat when he noticed the meat curry and asked them which meat it was. His parents said it was porcupine meat. Then the baby from the basket cried, 'Don't eat the meat. It is your wife's meat. The old couple killed my mother and ate her meat. The rest, they kept to serve you.' The boy was shocked. He stopped eating. He took the baby from the basket and took it to his sister-in-law.

His sister-in-law narrated everything. The boy said, 'See, I had chosen your sister as my wife. She left me. Now you should stay with me. And we will live a happy life.' The girl did not agree. So the boy gathered firewood and leaves, set fire to them and jumped into the fire along with his son.



The Ghost Woman

One day a boy dug some soil and put it in a bitter gourd seed. Then he watered it regularly. The seed sprouted and grew into a creeper. Then the boy built a manchan over it and the creeper spread. After a few days, bitter gourds came up. Fearing that someone might steal them, the boy guarded the bitter gourds.

One day, as he sat upon the manchan, an old woman came carrying a basket on her head and said, 'Son, there are so many bitter gourds here. Why don't you give me some? I will prepare some curry.' The boy thought an old woman was asking for bitter gourds. If he did not give them to her, it would not be nice. As he was about to drop a few gourds to her, the old woman said, 'Son, please don't drop them. The gourds will become dirty. Please hand them to me.' The boy tried to pass on the gourds to her but the old woman's hands were far too far for him to reach. He could not stretch his hands further. As the boy was trying to stretch his hand, the old woman pulled him down and put him inside her basket and walked towards the jungle. The boy wept inside the basket. He thought she was the same ghost woman of the story his mother used to tell him.

The old woman felt thirsty on the way. She was a ghost but appeared as a human being. She asked people on the way, 'O folks, where can I get some water?' Some people showed her where water would be available. The old woman was terribly thirsty. She had no patience to go ahead. So she kept the basket down and went to drink water.



When the old woman had walked away, the boy started crying aloud. The potters around heard his cries and removed the lid of the basket and saw the boy inside. They kept a stone inside the basket and replaced the lid. Then they took the boy with them.

After drinking water, the ghost came back, carried the basket and walked towards her home. She was very happy thinking that she would soon have tender meat to eat. After reaching home, she put down her basket and called out to her husband. When he appeared she said to him, 'Sharpen the spear, axe and knife. I have got something nice to eat. If you prepare some meat, then I will cook a meal and we will have our meal soon.'

The old man sharpened his knife and pierced it in the basket. He thought the boy would cry out. But instead of that there was a 'tan', 'tan' sound. The old man had a doubt. He removed the lid and found that there was a stone inside the basket. He shouted at his wife. The old woman became very upset. She said, 'Son, today you got away, but you'll see. I will take good care of you. I will certainly have your tender meat.' Days passed. The boy forgot all about the ghost. The ghost again came back to the boy's manchan in disguise. The boy could not recognize her. He passed on a few bitter gourds to her. She again pulled him and put him in her basket and started to walk home.

The boy was crying in despair. The woman put the basket on the floor and asked her husband to sharpen the spear and the knife. She kept the basket in the husking room and went to bathe in the pond. When the ghost was away, the boy cried loudly. Her daughter was husking nearby. She was curious to know what was there in the basket. When she opened the lid she saw a boy inside. She had not seen a boy earlier. She was curious to talk to the boy. The boy said, 'Your dress and ornaments look very beautiful.' She asked, 'Would you like to wear them?' The boy said yes. Then the girl gave her dress and ornaments to the boy to wear. And the boy wore all her clothes and ornaments. Then the girl asked him, 'Why were you sitting inside that basket?' The boy said, 'Haven't you ever sat in a



basket? Why don't you sit inside and see how it feels.' Then the girl went inside the basket and sat there happily. The boy immediately covered the lid of the basket. He wore the dress and ornaments of the girl and started husking.

The ghost came back after her bath. After some time the old man also came home. The old woman said, 'What are you waiting for? Pierce the boy in the basket and prepare meat. I shall cook.' The old man pierced the spear inside the basket. As the spear touched her body, the girl cried, 'I am your daughter sitting inside. Don't kill me.' But the old man did not listen to her, took the meat and gave it to the old woman to cook. The boy was watching all this in the husking room. After finishing their cooking, the old couple asked the disguised girl to come and have a meal. The boy wondered how he could eat a ghost's meat. He put some amber around his plate. The old man also sat down to eat. The old woman served curry and rice. The plates and cups were large in size. They started eating. The boy, after having some rice, would eat a piece of amber. It sounded as if he was chewing bones. Then the old man told his wife, 'She is so young. You should have given her some meat. Why have you given her bones to eat? She is tired of chewing.'

The boy got his chance. He said, 'Father, I can't eat any more,' and moved the cup towards him. The meal was over. The old couple went and slept. The boy went and sat on the heap of wood. As the old couple were sleeping, he started singing:

The chickens are big and small
The he-goat has a beard
How did the meat of your daughter taste?
Tell me, you old couple.

When the old woman heard the song, she woke up. They could understand the essence of the song. They looked for the boy who was responsible for feeding their daughter's meat to them. As they woke up, the boy got up and ran away. They followed him. The old woman was holding a husking rod and the old man an axe. The boy ran and the two followed him. On the way, the old man hit a huge pillar and died on the spot. The old woman also died as she fell down from a big rock.

The Tiger and the Jackal

In a particular village there lived an old couple. They had no children. The couple lived by getting roots from the jungle. Then the woman passed away. After the death of his wife the old man thought, 'I am aged. I cannot earn and eat. I can't even work and earn wages. It is better if I become a beggar and earn my living by wandering from village to village.' Then the old man took a stick and started begging.

One day he reached a particular village. There he went to a moneylender's house and asked for some gruel to drink. The people there offered him some gruel. He drank the gruel and satisfied, sat down for a moment. The moneylender observed the old man and asked, 'Where will you go old man?' The old man said, 'Where should I go, my lord? I am alone. I have nobody of my own. The old woman was there. She too left me. After her death, I have been wandering as a beggar.' The moneylender said, 'You are so old. You must be tired of walking all the way. If you agree, I can keep you in my house. Do not worry. I shall not send you to the fields to work. If you want, you can stay here.' The old man agreed to what the moneylender said.

From that day the old man went to guard the maize field. One day a jackal disguised himself as a king's soldier, wearing leaves and holding a stick in his hand. He came and said to the old man, 'Oh, old fellow. Don't you recognize people as you are sitting up there? People who sit usually do not take seriously the people who walk on the roads.' The old man took him to be the king's soldier and said in a trembling voice, 'You are my lord, whatever you want I shall give



you.’ The jackal said, ‘Give me a bunch of six baked maize cobs. I want to eat maize; or else I will complain against you to the king.’

The old man got scared. He immediately plucked a bunch of six maize cobs, baked them and gave them to the jackal. The jackal drank the old man’s gruel and ate his curry too. As he was starting to leave he said, ‘I shall be back tomorrow.’ From that day, the jackal would come there in disguise everyday and eat the maize and the old man’s gruel and curry. The old man starved. Soon he began to look lean and thin.’ One day the moneylender noticed the old man and said, ‘Old man, we give you enough gruel and curry to eat daily. But yet, why do you look so lean and thin?’ Then the old man narrated to the money lender the story of the king’s soldier. The moneylender did not believe him. He said, ‘Alright, today you sit on the manchan. I will hide there and see who the king’s sepoy is.’

That day the moneylender sat inside the maize field. After some time the jackal came in disguise as usual. He ate the maize cobs, gruel and curry from the old man and disappeared. The moneylender came to know about this and felt determined to teach him a lesson.

The next day the moneylender was hiding in the maize field. The old man was sitting on the manchan. The jackal came at exactly the same time and ate the old man’s maize, gruel and curry.

The next day, the moneylender prepared a statue of the old man with rice powder and placed it on the manchan. He asked the old man to go home and sleep. Then he took a stick and hid inside the maize field. The jackal reached there at the same time. He asked the old man to give him some maize. But it was not really the old man but a statue standing there. How could a statue respond to what the jackal had said?

The jackal got angry. He climbed up the manchan and gave a hard blow to the statue. But alas! He could not remove his hands. His hands were stuck to the statue. The jackal tried to pull away but could not do so. He got angry and said, ‘You dare to hold my hand! You have held on to my one hand. But don’t I have another hand?’ The jackal gave a blow to the statue with his other hand. His other



hand too got stuck. Then he got terribly angry and hit the statue with his two legs. His legs also got stuck.

Then the moneylender came out from hiding and thrashed the jackal severely. The jackal said to the moneylender, 'If you beat me here nobody will know about your strength. You should take me home and hit me there so that people in your village will come to know about your bravery and congratulate you.'

The moneylender liked the jackal's suggestion. It was already evening. He thought he would thrash the jackal before his village people. So he dragged the jackal to the village and tied him near the threshold there.

The jackal remained standing. It was midnight. The jackal saw a tiger passing that way. He called the tiger, 'Oh, uncle! Come here for a while.' The tiger asked, 'Are you my jackal nephew? What are you doing here?' The jackal said, 'Uncle, you need to get inside to know about my story. There is something nice for you here.' Then the tiger said, 'Nephew, how shall I come inside?' The jackal said, 'Untie the rope that has been tied around me.' The tiger untied the rope and got inside the pig shed and ate a pig. The jackal said, 'Uncle, you ate one pig. You can have many pigs here. But I need to urinate. I will go to the loo and come back.' The tiger had tasted pig's meat. He again wanted to have a pig. So he untied the jackal. The jackal came out and shut the door from outside and fled into the jungle.

The tiger ate a couple of more pigs. Then he remembered that he had to go to the jungle. So he tried to get out. But he found that the door was shut from outside. He was very angry with the jackal. But what could he do?

It was morning. The moneylender called the people of his village and took them to the pig shed so that he could beat the jackal before all. As he opened the door of the shed, the moneylender's condition was pitiable. He was terribly scared to see the tiger. He thought the people gathered there would kill the jackal. But who can control a tiger? The tiger too jumped in fear. He gave one slap here and another slap there and ran into the forest.



Once in the forest, the tiger breathed a sigh of relief. He was determined to kill the jackal by any means. Then he started looking for the jackal all around. One day he saw the jackal sitting at a particular spot and playing with sand. The jackal saw the tiger and asked, 'Uncle, what is the matter? Were you looking for me?' The tiger said, 'Nephew, I am searching for you alone. I have come to eat you.' The jackal said, 'Yes you will kill me, but I am repaying the loan of my parents. Look up there, they have come to ask for it.' The jackal was very clever. As the tiger looked up, he showed him how the clouds were moving. The tiger kept watching the moving clouds. The jackal threw some sand in his eyes and quickly ran away. The tiger's eyes were full of dust. He could not see anything. Then he cured his eyes with medicine. Once his eyes were cured, he looked for the jackal to eat him.

One day the tiger met him. The jackal was stitching a large basket of leaves. The tiger saw him and said, 'Nephew, you gave me enough trouble. I have other places to go to but first I will eat you up.'

The jackal said, 'You will eat me. But just look there.' The tiger saw that the jungle was on fire. The tiger felt very scared of fire. He asked the jackal, 'The fire is spreading to this side. After some time both of us will die. What shall we do? Think of a plan.' The jackal said, 'Uncle, that is the reason why I am stitching this big leaf basket. If you are afraid, you can get into it first and I will cover it with a lid. Then I will prepare another basket for me to stay safe.' The tiger got into the basket without waiting for another moment. Then the jackal closed the basket with a lid. The tiger sat inside the basket. The jackal gathered some dry leaves, set fire to the basket and ran away.

After some time the basket began to burn. With great difficulty the tiger managed to come out and cured himself by applying medicine.

One day the tiger saw the jackal carrying a pig. He said to the jackal, 'You have planned several times to kill me. Today, you will not escape. I shall certainly eat you.' The jackal said, 'Uncle, if you eat me now we cannot eat the pig together. If you don't eat me, then



we can have the pig together and then you can eat me.' The tiger liked what the jackal said. He said, 'No, nephew, I will not eat you now. Let us eat the pig first.' Then the jackal divided the pig's meat and said to the tiger, 'Uncle, in my family we are ten members including my children, parents, grandparents and so on. So I have made twelve divisions. I will take ten shares, you will take this and the other one. But first you should go and wash the pig's intestine and stomach. You can throw away the stomach in the river. Bring back only the intestine.' The tiger went to wash the pig's intestine and gave it to the jackal.

They together ate the meat that fell in their share. The tiger was not satisfied with the meat he had received. So he asked the jackal what he could eat. The jackal said, 'Uncle, I am still feeling hungry. So I will tear my stomach and eat my intestine.' He started eating the intestine he got from the tiger. The tiger said, 'Nephew, please tear my stomach. I will eat my intestine.' The jackal did not wait for a moment longer. He tore the tiger's stomach and the tiger died there. The jackal left for his house.



The Childless King

In a particular country there lived a king. He had three queens. But he had no children. Although he was the king of such a vast kingdom, people did not like him because he was childless. The king was very unhappy. But it was not in his hands. If God blessed him with a son, it was fine, otherwise he would have to put up with what people said. He had no way but to put up with all this. The queens too were quite unhappy.

Days passed by. One day a sage came to visit the king. He saw the king and said, 'I can understand your sorrow. But you have to obey what I say.' The king said, 'My Lord, I am ready to give you whatever you wish if you drive away my sorrow.' The sage smiled and said, 'See, now this is the month of Chaitra. Tomorrow is the Chaitra festival. The new harvest of mangoes will be tasted. You should go and tell the queens to polish the courtyard and ask them to wear new sarees.' The king said, 'My Lord, I will get all this done but tell me what more can I do?' The sage said, 'You do as I have said and go to your palace.' Then the king went to the palace.

The next day the king got up, had his bath, went to the sage and greeted him and said, 'Lord, I have come. Please tell me what I should do?' The sage passed him a small stick and said, 'Dear king, go and hit the mangoes on the tree only once with this stick. Some mangoes will fall down. Collect them and come back. Be careful, you should throw it. The king said yes and moved towards his palace. He was carrying the basket in one hand and in the other hand, a stick. When



he arrived at the tree, he saw that the tree was laden with mangoes. He threw the stick at the mango tree, thinking that all the mangoes would fall down. As he hurled the stick he found that only one mango fell. He thought, 'The sage has sent me to get mangoes. I should take many mangoes. How can I go back with only one mango?' Thus he disobeyed what the sage had said and hurled the stick once again. The stick got stuck to the branch and did not fall back. After some time it disappeared. As the stick did not fall down the king tried to look at the mango he had in his hand. The mango had disappeared. Then the king went to the sage and told him everything. The sage said, 'You should have done what I asked you to do. Because you disobeyed me this happened. Alright. Whatever you have done is over. Forget all about it. Go to the mango tree early tomorrow morning after having your bath. Then throw the stick only once and come back with whatever you get. I will tell you what to do then.' The king said, 'But my Lord, the stick disappeared yesterday. What shall I use to get mangoes?' The sage said, 'You need not worry. I am sending you to the tree and you must go. You will come to know once you are there.'

The next day the king had his bath and went to the mango tree. He saw that the tree was full of mangoes. The basket was there as it was kept. Then the stick fell in his hand. The king threw the stick at the mangoes. Two mangoes fell down. He collected them and went to the sage and said, 'Lord, two mangoes fell and I have got them with me.' The sage said, 'You should take them and offer them to the deity.'

The king went to the deity as the sage had said and made an offering of the mangoes. Then he took them to his favourite queen and asked her to eat them. The young and the middle queens were watching this but what could they do? The king gave both the mangoes to the elder queen. They could not comment on the king's behaviour. They stood watching the eldest queen eat the mangoes. At last she threw the seeds out. The two queens removed the seeds and ate one each.



The eldest queen did not know about this. She was glad that she would bear a son and he would ascend the throne. But the other queens became pregnant. The king was surprised. The elder queen was jealous of the younger ones. She was determined to fight with them as soon as they bore children.

The king was very happy to see that all his three queens were pregnant. He went in search of the sage to offer him a lot of wealth. But the sage was not there. The king sent his people to look for him. But they did not find the sage. The king thought that it was God himself who had appeared before him. He prayed again and again.

The queens gave birth to children. First the middle queen gave birth, then the youngest queen and at last the eldest one. The elder queen wanted to incite the children to quarrel, however, no one quarrelled but all lived a happy life. Then the people who condemned the king, started to praise him. The king, his children and the queens lived happily thereafter.



Glossary

Amla: a kind of gooseberry

Beth: forced labour

Chaitra: a month that falls between March and April

Chaitra Parab: a festival that is celebrated in Chaitra

Ghar-Juain: A son-in-law who lives with his in-laws in their home and has little freedom

Ghat: a spot on the bank of a river where people bathe, bathing place

Ghati: a mountain pass

Haat: the village market place

Kendu: a kind of forest fruit

Kereng: necklace

Lak: a sticky substance produced from a tree

Langur: a monkey

Machan: an elevated hut either built on the ground or on a tree to keep a watch over the fields

Mahaprasad: a bond of ritualized friendship

Mahul: a kind of forest flower

Manchan: a plank made in a tree to live in, surface of branches built over a creeper to enable it to spread



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Mandia: a kind of rice

Mantra: a chant

Mohua: a kind of flower from which liquor is distilled

Nuakhai: a festival

Pausa: a harvest festival

Ringa: chain

Sambar: deer

Sarangi: a kind of string instrument

Shruti: meant to be heard

Simuli: a tree which has thorns on its trunk

